

Views From my Ally

A Childhood Dream Explored Through Paint

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Abstract

The purpose of this project has been to work closely with my childhood dream over a 2 year period in order to discover how it manifests in my painting practice. My central research question is ‘how do the essential energies contained within the dream influence my painting practice?’ This project is an example of arts-based research, within the theoretical framework of Process Work. I have incorporated process work innerwork methods into my painting practice to approach the above research questions, and then I’ve self-reflected on the findings. The project is aimed at an audience interested in process work, and also other visual artists. This thesis discusses my process of making sixteen small paintings. A contribution is made to the field of Process Work as this project stands as an example of working with a childhood dream over a long time. It also introduces the language of picture construction as a way of amplifying experience in the visual channel. Simultaneously, the language and methods of process work are introduced to an art audience. This project bridges the disciplines of visual art and psychology.

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MY CHILDHOOD DREAM

I'm in bed with my mum, dad and sister. We are all asleep. I wake up and go into the next room, rubbing my eyes. The wall between the bedroom and living area is covered with big black cockroaches. They take off and start flying around the room. I shake my head to get them out of my hair, screaming. My father comes into the room and begins squashing them on the wall with a shoe.

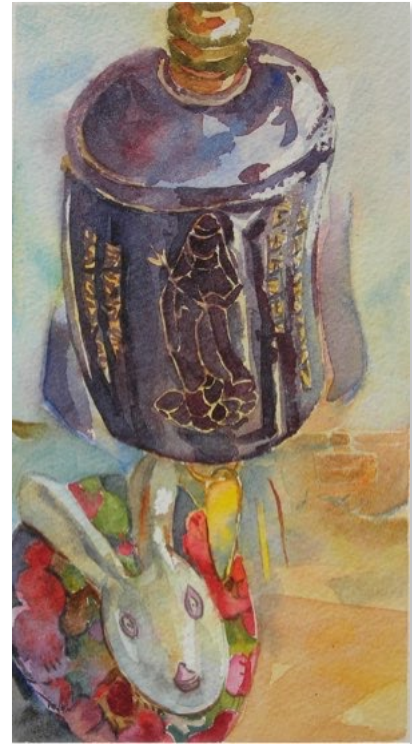


(I had this dream at the age of 3years old)

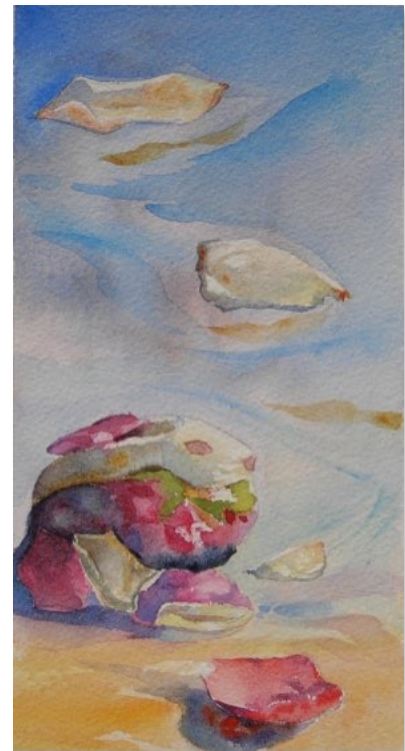
MESMERISM

MESMERISM

A song of delicate petals floats gently on a breeze.
In seeking to be known,
Rabbit is breathed into being.
Petals wrap her body,
Pulsating,
Colouring her skin.



Rabbit looks up.
A golden glimmer holds her gaze.
Mesmerised at the threshold
She is drawn into compassion.
Kwan Yin holds her difference.



CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

I have been curious about a recurrent patterning in my life for a long time. A patterning that I have just touched the edges of, but have never completely grasped. This patterning, I have come to realise, has mythical dimensions in the sense that it's timeless and much bigger than my identity. I've felt that all through my adult life I've been trying to get closer to it. Painting has been my life long tool for this exploration. My first exhibition of paintings was based on 'personal myths'. At the time, I was 26 years old, and I had a lot of difficulty in explaining what that meant to me. I had no clear method, no psychological structure or language for what seemed to emerge from my meditation and painting practice. These early paintings were about feeling states in nature.

Ethereal Flakes 1989



When I first encountered process work in a workshop, we were given an exercise on childhood dreams. The workshop was with Shar Edmunds and Maurie Shaw (2000) titled *Death as an Ally*. In this exercise each person had to write their childhood dream on a piece of paper and put it in a hat. Then each of us randomly chose someone else's childhood dream from out of the hat and worked on it like it was our own dream. It was a whacky Taoistic experience that left me disoriented. I was awestruck by how someone else's dream from a long time ago had meaning and relevance for me today. I had an experience of timeless interconnection through dreaming. My life process and inner life existed for me before I knew of the other person's dream. Yet their dream spoke to my process. I wondered how can someone have a dream before I was born, a dream that is central to their existence, and somehow it was meant for me today? I was curious about our interconnectedness and my assumptions about linear time. I got a glimpse of interdependence and the nature of time and I was hooked by this question.

This research project has given me the opportunity to consciously delve into my childhood dream, not knowing what may turn up. In this undertaking, I've held my childhood dream in my consciousness every time I paint for over the last two years. It has been exposing, uncomfortable and challenging as I have delved into my inner psychodynamics and complexes. There was no other topic that grabbed me in this way. This journey has brought my family and cultural history consciously into my present-day life. It has enhanced my painting practice and I am learning about how to paint in my way through doing this project.

I have specifically chosen to explore my childhood dream because I'm interested in how my childhood dream is like a blueprint for the energies that organise my being. I wondered, what would happen if I really embraced and worked with these mythical energies? How closely can I live with my mythbody in the world? How does it challenge and shape my identity? Most importantly, what influence does it have on my painting process itself? I want to differentiate for the reader that I am not illustrating my childhood dream, but rather I have focused on the different energies within the dream to discover more about my painting process and consequently me as a person. I discuss these energies in depth in chapter 5. By 'painting process' I mean the process I work through to make a painting. It is a combination of my technical skills as a painter, my meditation practice and my unique viewpoint of the world around me. The title *Views From my Ally* refers to viewing my inner life and painting process through the many eyes of my Ally, the cockroaches.

This practice that I have committed to, also leads me into deeper dialogue with the world. Perhaps in a sense, my final project is like pulling a childhood dream out of a hat like in the seminar in 2000. I am inviting you, dear reader and viewer on a journey through my dreaming process. There are no right or wrong interpretations on this journey. Together we hold open space to dream and ponder with our imagination. Our mythical processes organise us, and perhaps together we may discover something about our interconnection.

I have chosen a creative arts project because as I've mentioned, painting is for me a life long passion and contemplation practice. It was there before process work and is a natural way of thinking for me. Process work has given me a language and a framework for

this mysterious conversation I call an art practice. The structural language of process work has helped me to deepen the meaning of my self-reflective experience and to speak about it. Throughout my studies in process work, inner-work methods have naturally embedded themselves into my dialogue with paint, paper, brush, water, air and light. This contextual essay demonstrates how I consciously use process work methods as a visual artist to explore a question in a sustained way.

My approach has been to use process work innerwork and dreamwork methods in conjunction with my painting practice, to conduct arts-based research. As a research method arts-based practices draw on literary writing, music, performance, dance, film, visual arts and other mediums. Leavy explains that "Representational forms include but are not limited to short narratives, novels, experimental writing forms, poems, collages, paintings, drawings, performance scripts, theatre performances, dances, documentaries and song (2009, p. 3). Arts-based research is a methodological genre within the qualitative research paradigm. It emphasises practice as a valid research method in order to break away from conventional methods of research. It also "rejects the idea of tools that are neutrally implemented" (Leavy, 2009, p. 3). Arts-based research values the practice and experience of the researcher to answer questions. My painting practice has many dimensions to it and images are integral to my experience of the world. Images hold layers of meaning. Layers of information are conveyed simultaneously rather than in a linear sequence. An image is like a network of information in how it is composed and the symbolic meaning it contains. When I engage in making an image, I discover that more ideas emerge. The Tao Te Ching says:

The Tao is like a bellows:

it is empty yet infinitely capable.

The more you use it, the more it produces;

the more you talk of it, the less you understand.

Hold on to the centre.

Lao Tzu (as cited in Mitchel, 1995, chapter 5)

I have the sense of discovering an image, rather than creating it. To do this I follow my night-time dreams and use process work innerwork methods to unfold the content. However, I have noticed a curious thing occurs as I sit closely to my childhood dream. I'm discovering that my childhood dream is also teaching me how to paint. The way I paint is changing through this exploration, as are my perceptions. My night-time dreams are challenging me not just as a person, but also as an artist. I will demonstrate this in chapter 5.

Poetry is also part of this final project. Poems evoke feelings and atmospheres in a similar way to pictures. Doorways to further realms open as I feel into my paintings and give them verbal expression. Poetry has helped me to ground the content of my paintings and tie my paintings together. Making conscious use of channel changes has been an important development in my practice, and will be discussed in later chapters.

I have produced 16 watercolour paintings with accompanying poems and this contextual essay. The 16 paintings fit together as short sequences. Short sequences speak to other short sequences through association. In this way themes are woven together like a network. The entire piece is in fact one painting, composed of 16 little paintings that depict

viewpoints into my inner life. The viewpoints are my Ally (the cockroaches sitting on a wall) looking into me. I am an inner journey made up of dreams, difficulties and ecstasy. My cockroach viewpoints are also part of me. While I intend to exhibit this painting in a gallery, I will also produce a visual book of the paintings and poems. This will eventually be available on-line.

This final project is very personal and it exists primarily as an example of working with a childhood dream. Many people may find this project of interest. The paintings and poems are intended for general public viewing as an exhibition. I want to introduce the concept of childhood dreams, life myths and process work innerwork practice to an art audience. I hope to incite curiosity and connect to the mythical path in others. Art practitioners would benefit from this contextual essay in that I am laying bare what lies at the core of my creative process, beyond materials and technique. From one viewpoint, I feel my vulnerability when I see my audience as other. From another viewpoint, I am doing the most natural thing I can do. I am giving birth to a creative piece that has a life of its own in the world, and its mythical nature is to network. My childhood dream encourages me to work with many viewpoints. Through my practice of innerwork and painting, I am learning to recognise that the audience is also me. This will become more evident in chapter 4 when I dive deeply into my childhood dream.

This creative project along with its contextual essay is also intended for a process work audience. The project is an example of long-term work with a childhood dream and the unexpected outcomes. This research also makes a contribution to working in a visual channel.

It is an example of how inner-work combines with a visual arts practice beyond energy sketches and exercises. Painting is a practice that I engage in most days and I am immersed in it.

I've engaged in this practice since I was a very small child. I was 5 years old when my family came to Australia from Pakistan. We had little money. There were very few books in the house. My mother would spend hours drawing with my sister and myself. We then created stories from our pictures. My mother was my first art teacher. She gave me the simplest inner-work method of all and encouraged it with love and a belief in my abilities. She sent me off to life drawing at the age of 14, and she never thought it unusual that I was the only person in the room under 30 years old. My mother has helped me finance the building of my studio in more recent years. This love and belief in me as a visual artist is culturally unusual in a struggling migrant family from Pakistan in the 1970s. My parents wanted educational opportunities for me in Australia. For my mother, this meant for me to be whatever I wanted. My mother is a blessing.

It was expected that I should go to art school. I did attend for most of an undergraduate degree, but felt a lack of guidance. I learned very little about painting, and a lot about politics. I was part of a migrant minority from the poorer suburbs in Sydney. Most of my teachers were male and my fellow students were female. They came from an elite social status with attitudes to match. I was considered fortunate to have 'got in'. I didn't have the words to articulate the cultural divide and how much was missing for me in contemporary art

debate. My response was to leave and follow my own practice as an artist. My mother loved me through this and never saw me as an art school failure.

Consequently, my development as an artist has been a long and slow cooking. It has been a development through persistence, experimentation, following what I need and making mistakes. I have learned to love and value 'mistakes', as they give me permission and freedom to play with nonsense. My art practice has taught me how to work with the unexpected. A constant challenge I set for myself is 'if it's there, how can I work with it'? I have had a joint exhibition with the sculptor Helen Printer, where we have challenged each other to respond to the other's work. We had an art conversation where we both used process work methods to deepen a visual and proprioceptive dialogue with each other. My explorations in improvisation have also led me into Playback Theatre to spontaneously collaborate with others in stories and movement. Playing has then fed back into my painting practice.

My pathway as an artist has been non-linear. I have steadily built a painting skill base accompanied by the spiritual attitudes of play and curiosity to work collaboratively with what is unknown. I deeply love the whole process of making pictures and the quality of my work is rooted in my growing sense of freedom.

The next chapter outlines the theoretical concepts behind childhood dreams in the field of depth psychology and process work. I show how process work has built on the

foundations of Jung's thinking and takes it further. This chapter provides a theoretical context for my arts-based research.

KWAN YIN'S DANCE

KWAN YIN'S DANCE

Longing for belonging,

Trembling.

Rabbit considers her entrance.

Ruminates in anxious sweat.

'In my difference, how do I enter?

Alone, I am alone.'

'Trembles turn my body.

Quivering compass needle,

I am pulled headlong into a dark glow.

North East.

Stumbling disorientation.

A slow spinning nausea overtakes me'



KWAN YIN SPEAKS

'Gyrating 360 degrees

And around again.

I survey all that I am.

In a circle I am one, in love with my whole being.

Kwan Yin!

A compass of compassion.

I sway and dance, robes flowing'.



Held in a singing universe,
Rabbit is but one song.
She exits with her remembered self.
Pondering . . .
'Am I the one before?
Or am I the afterthought?'



CHAPTER 2. REVIEWING CHILDHOOD DREAMS

The term 'childhood dream' can mean many things. When I use this term, I mean the earliest dream or memory that a person can recall. This chapter will examine the conceptual development of childhood dreams in psychology. Although this is not an exhaustive examination of the topic, it is what has informed my thinking in designing my painting project. I will look at the different viewpoints of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, and then consider James Hillman's development of Jung's ideas. I will also present an overview of Arny Mindell's contribution to the theory of childhood dreams and then briefly outline how other researchers have used art practice within the body of Process Work literature to explore life myths.

Sigmund Freud

Freud essentially saw children's dreams as wish fulfilment. By this he meant that unfulfilled wishes occurring for a child during the day would instigate a dream at night. Freud wrote:

. . . it is a wish-feeling of infantile strength only. . . It would rather seem that as we learn to control our impulses by intellectual activity, we more and more reject as vain the formation or retention of such intense wishes as are natural to children.

(Freud, 1920, p. 91)

Freud clearly didn't see childhood dreams as significant, but rather as "infantile wishes" to be corrected by the intellect. He also saw them as arising from the immediate situation and not of long-term importance. Most importantly, he saw them arising from a personal unconscious.

Carl Jung

Jung departed from Freud's thinking in some very significant ways and the realm of childhood dreams was one of them. Jung made many significant contributions to the field of dream work. Firstly, he proposed the concept of a collective unconscious as distinct from a personal unconscious that was central to Freud's theories. Both Jung and Freud considered the personal unconscious to contain painful repressed memories of experience, weak sense perceptions that cannot reach consciousness or material that is still unripe to come to the fore. However, for Jung the unconscious was composed of two layers, the personal unconscious as defined above, and the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is a universal or transpersonal realm of the psyche. Jung describes the collective unconscious as follows:

The collective unconscious is an image of the world that has taken aeons to form. In this image certain features, the archetypes or dominants, have crystallized out of the course of time. They are the ruling powers. (as cited in Stevens, 1999, p. 39)

Images were very important to Jung. He was a great visionary and image maker in his own right. It is interesting to note that in the quote above Jung was aware of the collective unconscious through a visual channel. He saw the evolution of meaningful layers. The image

is a living entity. Archetypes are types of primordial or archaic patterns that are part of the collective unconscious. They are inherent in us as human beings, and they shape our perceptions and experience. This "image of the world" (as cited in Stevens, 1999, p. 39) is dynamically changing through the lived pattern of our lives. When Jung says, "they are the ruling powers" (as cited in Stevens, 1999, p. 39), he means that we are strongly affected by archetypal forces and cannot dismiss them with our intellect. Jung thought there were many archetypes, such as:

Figures (e.g., mother, child, father, God, wise man), archetypal events (e.g., birth, death, separation from parents, courting, marriage , etc.) and archetypal objects (e.g., water, sun, moon, fish, predatory animals, snakes). (as cited in Stevens, 1999, p. 39)

The relationship between ourselves and these universal patterns is reciprocal. While these patterns shape our experience, they also evolve through us living our lives with awareness. What struck me in Jung's writings is that he perceived archetypal patterns as living forces as real as you or I, emerging from the collective unconscious. They are not figures of our imagination as that would presume that we have control over our dreams. In this quote below, Jung suggests that our identity is part of a dreamt field.

This is the secret of dreams- that we do not dream, but rather we 'are dreamt'. We are the object of the dream, not its maker. . . The dream is dreamed to us. We are the objects. We simply find ourselves put into situations. (Jung, 2008, p. 159)

This profound statement of Jung's disturbs the seat of perceived existence. He implies an entity who gives us dreams while, at the same time, we are part of the dream. The line between what is 'real' and 'imaginary' is blurred.

Jung further departed from Freud in that he based his view of the psyche in what he called the Self, not the ego as Freud did. The Self is like an organising force behind a person, and includes the whole psyche with all its potential. The Self seeks wholeness and has a meaning. Jung referred to this as its teleological function. Thus the Self seeks completion.

Between 1936 and 1940, Jung delivered a series of seminars on children's dreams. He postulated that a basic blueprint of our disposition is present from birth, and our earliest dreams come out of the "totality of our personality" (Jung, 2008, p. 20) or the Self. He thought that children are more closely aligned with the collective unconscious and that the dreams of adults mostly refer to personal life. Jung reasoned that later in life we are naturally forced to become more one sided as we create our identity.

As a very young boy Jung would play an imaginary game with himself. He wondered,

I am sitting on top of this stone and it is underneath. But the stone could also say 'I' and think: 'I am lying here on this slope and he is sitting on top of me'. The question then arose: 'Am I the one who is sitting on the stone, or am I the stone on which he is sitting?' This question always perplexed me, and I would stand up, wondering who was what now? (Jung, 1989, p. 20)

From this quote we can see the seeds of Jung's theories as described above were present in his childhood imaginings. We can see a blurring of identification with him and the stone. The perplexing question arose of itself through his perception and wonder. Yet, who asks the question? Jung thought it was the wonder of a child closely identified with the collective unconscious.

Lastly, I want to touch on Jung's method of working with dreams that he called Active Imagination. He developed this method through writing the Red Book (Jung, 2009). Shamdasani described how during the time of Jung's writing of the Red Book that "self-experimentation was used in medicine and psychology. Introspection had been one of the main tools of psychological research" (Jung, 2009, p. 19). Researchers were experimenting with waking fantasies, hallucinations, automatic writing and trance states. Jung developed active imagination by firstly allowing himself to enter into fantasy and carefully noting everything. Jung says, "Permitting fantasy in myself had the same effect as would be produced on a man if he came into his workshop and found all the tools flying about doing things independently of his will" (Jung, 2009, p. 19). During his experiments, Jung feared that he would go mad. He questioned what he was doing, saying to himself: "What is this I am doing, it certainly is not science, what is it?" Then a voice said to me, 'That is art' (Jung, 2009, p. 20). Jung realised that the voice he heard was that of a woman. So began his dialogue with his unconscious. This was a part of himself that he was not identified with and that held a different viewpoint.

The significant thing about active imagination is that it is an experiential way of understanding dreams rather than intellectual. Although the technique of active imagination is age old and has been used across cultures, Jung's naming and use of it is a major contribution to psychology. A dream is understood by re-entering the dream and creating a dialogue between the different parts that are present. As we become more fluid with the dialogue, we begin to experience more than one view point. The other figures present in a dream have different qualities and offer other viewpoints. Through a dialogue with archetypes, we can begin to identify more with their qualities and eventually we can recognise those qualities as our own. Jung thought that dreams compensated for the one-sided viewpoint of our identity.

James Hillman

Hillman took a certain flavour from Jung's theories and developed Archetypal Psychology. He wanted to consider things with fresh eyes and honour how phenomena presented themselves in life. He moved away from the structured and categorised model of the psyche that Jungian psychology had come to be, while paying tribute to Jung. Hillman firmly placed our identity within the psyche or what he called the soul, and never thought of dreams as compensatory. Let's examine this more closely as it has important implications for our discussion on childhood dreams.

In his book *The Soul's Code*, Hillman (1996) suggests his 'acorn theory'. In this theory he posits that within every person's soul is a unique pattern, in the same way that an acorn holds the pattern for an entire oak tree. This pattern is like a calling that reveals itself

through how we live our lives, as well as an attitude or essence present in how we perform an act. Hillman describes it "like an implicate order folded all through the visible" (Hillman, 1996, p. 124). He elaborates further: "Sometimes this invisible visible is referred to as the spirit of a place, the quality of a thing, the soul of a person, the mood of a scene, the style of an art" (Hillman, 1996, p. 124).

For Hillman this image or pattern within our soul does not develop, rather how we manifest and how we live our lives is that essential image. Like an image, everything is present at the same time and it is complete. The acorn is an image of our destiny. Hillman quotes Picasso as an example: "As Picasso said, 'I don't develop; I am'" (1996, p. 7).

Hillman saw this image within our soul as a guiding force that remembers our calling. He called it a daimon. It is like an accompanying personal guide through life. He further defines the daimon by saying the following:

It resists compromising reasonableness and often forces deviance and oddity upon its keeper, especially when it is neglected or opposed. It offers comfort and can pull you into its shell, but cannot abide innocence. It can make the body ill. It is out of step with time, finding all sorts of faults, gaps and knots in the flow of life- and it prefers them. It has affinities with myth, since it is itself a mythical being and thinks in mythical patterns. (Hillman, 1996, p. 39)

From the quote above we can see that our daimon is a lot more than our personality. It is a mythical pattern that seeks manifestation. Here I understand the term

mythical to mean that it is a pattern rooted in the collective unconscious. As a pattern our daimon can have different appearances and can guide us. If we oppose it, we can demonise it and feel troubled by life's events. Daimon and demon are two sides of the same pattern that is ours to struggle with.

The pathway that Hillman suggests to working with our daimon is one of 'growing down,' in the same way that an acorn roots itself in the earth. By this he means to bring it more consciously into the world, and to connect with humanity through it. We need to congruently live through our daimon.

Arnold Mindell

Arnold Mindell continued Jung's work in another direction through the development of Process Oriented Psychology, or Process Work. Mindell credits Jung's work as part of the foundation of Process Work, along with quantum physics, Taoism, shamanism and indigenous cosmologies. He studied quantum physics before becoming a Jungian analyst. His original research in psychology focused on the interrelationship between body symptoms and night-time dreams, and how they reflect each other. He named this mirroring the dreambody. Mindell also studied the connection between chronic body symptoms and childhood dreams.

Process Work considers how information is perceived and grounded in our senses. In this way Mindell's approach is phenomenological and pragmatic. Diamond and Spark Jones give an overview of the development of Mindell's work when they say,

He coined the phrase 'the dream happening in the moment,' to convey the idea that all experiential phenomena are manifestations of a dreaming reality and can serve as ways of accessing non-ordinary consciousness . . . Mindell's theoretical emphasis shifted from the link between dream and body to the concept of the 'dreaming process' as a unified field. (2004, p. 7)

In this section I will look closely at the development of Mindell's thinking around childhood dreams.

Mindell considers the signals a person expresses along with synchronicities present in the environment, when tracking people's experiences. People and the environment that they exist in give off signals that reflect the background dreaming that is present in a field. He has made this method of following experience applicable to a person's inner world, relationships and also working with groups. This method lies at the heart of process work. Mindell is not limited to dream analysis and verbal interaction. Rather, he seeks the dreaming experience that is alive in the moment and follows signals occurring in a field. As Diamond & Spark Jones (2004) point out in the above quote, Mindell termed this unified field awareness the 'dreaming process'.

Where Mindell clearly departs from Jung and the Archetypal psychology of Hillman is the emphasis on process and not the state orientation of archetypes. A state-

oriented view happens when we divide the flow of ourselves into discrete parts. Our description of our identity and what disturbs us can become a fixed polarity. What Mindell means by process is how an individual perceives their experience through different channels of perception. The method of process work follows signals perceived in six main channels. These channels are proprioception (or felt experience), kinaesthetic or (movement), visual, auditory, relationship, and the world. In following the flow of our awareness through channels, we follow an ongoing stream of experience that is naturally happening in the moment. I will explain the concept of channels in more detail in chapter 3 as part of my working method.

For Mindell, dreaming is an ongoing process that is partly personal, but dreaming also belongs to a field consciousness. He defines fields as follows:

Fields are powers that move you, like a magnetic field or the gravity field, a kind of field the Taoists called the Tao: forces or energies that move us around. Fields occupy space, and they contain energy so there can be no true vacuum. (Mindell, 2013, p. 15)

The dreambody also has field-like qualities, similar to those described in physics. We are pulled and influenced in different directions by our dreaming. As Mindell suggests above, fields are pregnant with forces. What Mindell calls dreamfigures are like energetic patterns that structure a field and manifest as dream images, body states, addictions, moods, relationship and world problems that have an impact on us. Mindell holds a broader view than Jung when he says, "I know that Jung thought archetypal images were basic to us. I suggest that there are basic energies that appear as images" (2013, p.145).

Clearly Mindell differentiates between energies and the images we perceive as archetypes. It's the energy behind an archetype that really matters. Mindell uses the term dreamfigures rather than archetypes to loosen our attachment to the figure and hold them more lightly. The form that these energies take is not fixed and can have different appearances. It's the flow in nature that counts.

Since childhood dreams have a strong collective component, they are related to the global field that we are born into. Often these dreams seem like nightmares and may be recurring. These energetic disturbances are usually linked to what our family history and culture have accepted or marginalised, such as our values (Mindell, 2004, p. 157). Mindell draws a parallel between our family or cultural identity and chronic body symptoms by saying, "Your symptoms express how the force of your dreaming reacts to the boundary conditions you needed in order to maintain your particular identity" (2004, p. 157). Consequently, our chronic symptoms and childhood dreams are also a personal challenge for the development of our family and cultural history.

Process work is a paradigm that does not take a causative approach to working with body symptoms. It does not try to get rid of the experience. Rather, symptoms are dreaming happening within the body. Since body symptoms often disturb us, there is our identity that is disturbed by a disturbance. What separates us from the disturber is the edge of our known identity. Yet this disturber or 'other' is also a part of us that is less known. A pertinent question is, what is our body trying to express that our identity can't? In childhood

dreams and with chronic symptoms, long-term edges are present between two or more different energies. In befriending what we feel as 'other,' we develop more fluidity within a polarity we notice in ourselves. We get to know ourselves better as a whole, and our personal, cultural and collective history is worked on.

In *Coma: Key to Awakening*, Mindell (1989) makes a distinction between the real body, the dreambody and the mythbody. When we identify with our consensus reality real body, we feel like victims of the dreambody and we suffer. The dreambody is trying to get our attention. Our more recent dreams and fantasies relate to dreambody experiences. What Mindell calls the mythbody, are experiences and body sensations that need special help to access. Sometimes we use drugs or meditative practices to enter into the alternative perspectives our mythbody has to offer. For instance, sometimes we become aware of pain when another person presses points on our body, such as in the practice of acupuncture. These experiences lay "just over the threshold of our ability to feel them" (Mindell, 1989, p. 84). Our inaccessible feelings along with the stories and images that are associated with them are more mythical and impersonal in their origin. Through our mythbody experiences, we connect to big questions and immense tasks that life gives us. This task is akin to the daimon that Hillman talks about. Mindell explains the following regarding the origin of chronic body problems:

Many diseases, including various forms of cancer, are mythbody diseases, because their beginning stages are rarely felt. The feelings are inaccessible; we may not even dream about them. . . Thus any form of deep body work that connects us to the mythbody's almost inaccessible feelings and images is the beginning of

preventative medicine for insidious diseases as long as the experiences unravelled by bodywork are processed. (Mindell, 1989, p. 85)

What Mindell is suggesting here is that through bodywork we may access dreaming, but the experience needs to be brought into the world and lived. It's like Hillman's concept of 'growing down' discussed above.

Since chronic body symptoms are organised by mythic patterns, our childhood dreams are somewhat predictive of physiological problems and psychological behaviour. In *Quantum Mind and Healing*, Mindell proposes a parallel between genetic codes and childhood dreams and coins the term dreamgenes by explaining that, "in biological reality, our genetic expression appears as units of inheritance; in psychological reality our long-time patterns appear as symbols in childhood dreams" (2004, p. 150).

What is interesting is Mindell's implication that by living closely with the energies in your childhood dream, sections of these patterns are sensitive to transformation through awareness. Hence, chronic body problems, family and cultural history can be worked on through childhood dreams as they share a common underlying patterning. Mindell elaborates on this thinking further in the quote below.

Childhood dreams typically show a combination of genes from both parents, and often a conflict of some sort. By favouring one of these genes . . . we marginalise the other. . . Marginalisation comes about spontaneously and unconsciously. By identifying ourselves with only some of our parts, we create an identity based on

marginalised parts. These marginalised parts almost always turn up as a symptom or as scary dreamfigures seeking attention. (Mindell, 2003, p. 153)

Significantly, Mindell draws a parallel between our perception of the energetic signatures of both our parents and the energies present in our childhood dream. In the unconscious pull towards an identity, which is in part shaped by family and cultural dynamics, a conflict is created. If our childhood dream is a map of our wholeness, then our disavowed parts form an identity that we are disturbed by. This polarity and the ensuing conflict at the edge between two identities is central to our existence. The conflict is like a Koan that is both a personal and collective dreaming, to be answered through living our lives.

Through the lens of quantum physics, Mindell stresses an awareness of how fields, dreams and body symptoms are non-local. In consensus reality (CR), our identity is very much local. What Mindell calls non-consensus reality (NCR) includes our dreamlike experiences, feelings and fantasies that make up our inner world. This realm of experience is multidimensional and links us through time and space. In our wholeness we are both local and non-local simultaneously, yet we tend to marginalise our non-local perceptions. Mindell explains this problem as follows:

The multidimensionality of our biology and our world is one reason why we sometimes fail to solve body problems by solely addressing one body location. Local medicine ignores the non-local nature of the person and field in which their body lives. In Rainbow Medicine, symptom work is both local and non-local. (Mindell, 2004, p. 105)

Jung called this synchronicity and Mindell takes the concept of non-locality further through his method of space-time dreaming. In space-time dreaming, the inner polarity between our identity and a disturbance is reduced to essential energies. By moving between the two energies, Mindell encourages us to befriend the disturbance as part of ourselves. In our wholeness we are nature herself. He further encourages loosening up and a detached perspective from the space / time viewpoint of the universe (Mindell, 2013). Our whole self is much bigger than our CR identity. From a more encompassing viewpoint, we can begin to consciously live the paradox of nature, that is two seemingly opposing forces at the same time. On this path, a new way of being enters existence.

In *Dance of the Ancient One*, Mindell (2013) goes on to suggest that our mythbody and childhood dream or earliest memory organises us around the time of our death. Mindell suggests this also happens in deep meditation experiences when he says:

Just before death, again and again, deep experiences appear that correspond to, and seem to be organised by your childhood dreams. There seems to be a mythic pattern moving us and that mythic pattern appears in your childhood dream. So there is a dreambody: that is the experiences you feel in the moment, and then maybe over long periods of time, and right up to death and beyond whatever death means. Maybe the myth goes further. Your earliest childhood dream and earliest childhood memories are big mythic patterns. And then at the deepest level, there is the non-cognitive and non-visual experience of the Processmind. (Mindell, 2013, p. 144)

This alluring quote suggests a universal perspective where death is a necessary part of an ongoing process. Mindell's most recent thinking has moved well away from an individual psychology to something more encompassing. In the above quote Mindell continues the thought that our mythic patterning exists beyond our CR existence. Beyond what is dreamed is something that can't be conceived, because concepts arise from it. What Mindell calls Processmind is an organising intelligence or a universal system mind. He encourages the perspective that while our bodies and our identity shape each other, we are also organised by a pregnant universal field. Space-time dreaming is the psychological experience of Processmind.

Our identification with a small rigid viewpoint that sets up disturbances and opponents in consensus reality is central to our fear of death. Mindell explains:

Who are you? . . . From the viewpoint of consensus reality, you are your normal, little self, your little u, a couple of X energies disturbing you, and you are the dance between them. Polarities are supposed facts in consensus reality. But remember what the Processmind and Buddhism tell us: nothing is fixed. We are a dance between these apparently fixed things. You are a dance looking like a person. You are moving back and forth between these various energies though you identify as a person. . . . We are a process, but our everyday mind denies that. It denies that we are a dance. (Mindell, 2013, p.148)

Mindell suggests that when we loosen up our awareness and stop trying to control it from our little u perspective, that awareness expands into Processmind. This perspective allows a

bigger picture with a more relaxed view. From this view we are a flowing dance between parts and levels of consciousness, organised by the universe.

In the above discussion I have given a particular definition to process and its relevance to the significance of childhood dreams. Process is the flow of signals through channels of perception. I have emphasised how Process Work takes a field perspective, and that dreamfigures are energies that structure a field. The dreamfigures that are behind chronic body symptoms, and that are present in childhood dreams, are non-local. They are collective energies shared by the world, and they challenge us personally, our families and cultural history. They are disavowed parts that arise through the formation of our identity and as such, they offer a growth towards wholeness. Mindell suggests that we free up our attachment to our identity and recognise that we are actually a dance between energies in a universal consciousness.

Life Myth and Arts-based Research in Process Work

Some other writers within the field of process work have also written about childhood dreams and life myths. Alan Strachan (1992) closely examined Mindell working with a client on her childhood dream and chronic body symptom. He was interested to document the correspondence between a chronic body symptom and childhood dream through the structural framework of process work.

Lone Norgaard (2009) explored the connection between childhood dreams and pre-birth stories to access a person's mythical pattern. By pre-birth stories she meant short narratives or fragments of situations that we have heard during our upbringing that may connect with our time of conception and incubation within the womb. In this qualitative analysis Norgaard explores other people's pre-birth stories using a process oriented drawing exercise to express their experience. She then draws a comparison with the pattern underlying their childhood dream to show that pre-birth stories also reflect life myths.

Two other researchers who have explored their life myth through using arts-based practices are Suzette Payne and Anusuya Starbear. Payne (2009) documented a synchronous journey of discovery around her ancestry. She used Open Studio art methods and Process Work innerwork methods to deepen her connection with the dreaming earth. Starbear's (2009) research is an extraordinary example of using Process Work innerwork methods and arts-based research to work with body trauma. These authors give accounts of very personal healing journeys.

Niyati Evers has also explored her life myth in a very personal way through writing, where her consensus reality life forms the basis for fictional storytelling. She says, "I used my own story as a mirror to explore the 'river of meaning' that runs through life and to apply Process Work theories and applications to my life myth" (Evers, 2011, p.10). For Evers the writer is a medium, channelling secrets. Ghosts of the Holocaust are unveiled in the context of a family system. A healing dialogue happens across a space-time field. Writing is a shamanic process where the dead may speak and voices can be fully heard.

In this section I have given a brief outline of the research done within the field of process work around childhood dreams and life myths. Most of these researchers have used arts-based research to understand more about their mythical pattern. The influence of childhood dreams in our lives is widespread and to date research is limited. There is scope for much more.

This chapter provides a historical and theoretical context for my research. It also provides a context for my lived experience and perception, both within me and of the world around me. Making art is the expression of a self-reflective practice. It is rooted in my perception. The next section outlines some process work methods that I have found useful in this exploration. I then go on to discuss my childhood dream in detail and how it applies to me. In chapter 5, I show how I've applied process work methods to my painting process. I explore how the energies of my childhood dream influence my painting process.

SINGING BUILDINGS & THE DASH

SINGING BUILDINGS

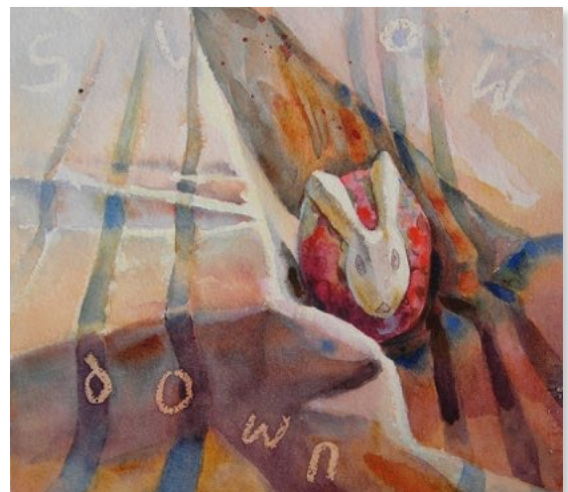
A building channels an eloquent song,
 Calling for connection to her neighbour.
 Rumbling through the neighbourhood,
 Confused residents dismantle the call.
 Unspoken expectation
 And assumptions kill dreams.
 NO!
 A resounding answer.

Pensive rabbit listens to the overtures.
 A hum of indifference,
 Cloaked in politeness.
 Attuned and quivering, she observes
 'How politically correct we are!
 Numb buildings, diluted feelings'.
 In a flash she leaves with no trace.



THE DASH

The rabbit dash,
 A scamper for self preservation.
 In fullness I wobble
 Steadied by dragon lines.
 'Slow down!'
 Sinking happens.
 Boundaries lost to a Dreaming Earth



CHAPTER 3. A PROCESS WORK APPROACH

I have approached 'researching' my childhood dream in an experiential way. While this project has been a focused inquiry, it has also been lots of fun and playful. I have used process work methods to follow a mystery. In this chapter I will elaborate on some process work theory and methods that have been useful to me for exploring my relationship with painting.

Metaskills

Amy Mindell (1995) coined the term metaskills to describe spiritual or feeling attitudes towards oneself and others. Such attitudes include compassion, detachment, scientific and inquiring, or even not knowing. While she speaks of metaskills primarily in a therapeutic context, they are also invaluable to art practice. In discussing "the spiritual art of therapy," Amy Mindell (1995) bridges the relationship between art and therapy. Such attitudes or sensibilities are beyond techniques or theories but are inherent within us. Through noticing the presence of metaskills in ourselves, we are able to call on them and cultivate them consciously. "Metaskills flow into one another and do not have clearly definable boundaries" (Mindell, 1995, p. 20).

When preparing to paint, I've noticed that openness and curiosity are very necessary permission-giving attitudes that encourage play to happen. Imagination needs loads

of love and encouragement. I've realised that imagination is not mine to own or be responsible for. Imaginative thinking is an active stream that I enter into. At night when I sleep, dreaming goes on without me being aware of it happening. As mentioned in chapter 2, our body symptoms and subtle body experience reflect our night-time dreams. Dreaming is happening all the time. In fact, I have found that when I drop out of my identity with its one viewpoint, I enter into an imaginative flow and my awareness naturally coalesces into another perspective. In the practice of painting I give myself permission to free my perceptions from judgements and expectations, and attend to what is happening.

The Metaskill of fluidity then becomes very important. Nature is full of spontaneous and unexpected signals. When I follow the flow of nature, I open my senses and notice what I perceive inside and outside of me. My entire body is a sense organ for experiencing existence. I try to differentiate and refine what I perceive, and notice how I perceive it. I gather as much information as I can from what I experience. When I open up my senses, I experience phenomena through different channels of perception. Process work calls this *sensory-grounded information*, or information that is grounded in our senses. Grounded means that other people can also understand the information. The information becomes persistent in consensus reality.

Primary and Secondary Processes

Process work theory differentiates between experiences that are more known to us and other unknown or disturbing experiences that we marginalise. Known experiences that are aligned with our identity are referred to as our primary process. Experiences that we

marginalise are described as our secondary process. Our identity is defined by an edge. What exists over that edge is experienced as 'not me'. We can begin to explore a secondary process by gathering sensory-grounded information and noticing what channel that information occurs in. For instance, I do not closely identify with the energies present in my childhood dream. They are secondary to the quiet, introverted person that I see myself as. I am more aligned with the rabbit in my Ally's views (see 'Singing Buildings' and 'The Dash' on page 47). In this example, the buildings are secondary to rabbit as she finds it difficult to have a voice.

Channels

Process work names four main channels of perception. These are visual (what is seen), auditory (what is heard), proprioceptive (describes things that are felt) and kinaesthetic (movements and body postures that we are unaware of). When I once again consider rabbit in the painting of 'Singing Buildings', I imagine myself as her. I notice myself sitting still and listening (auditory channel), while feeling an explosive energy building up inside. When feeling the build up, I am in a proprioceptive channel that explodes into movement when I dash off. Two other channels are also recognised. These are relationship and the world channel, and are considered to be made up of the previous four channels. The many voices of the singing buildings in conversation is an example of the world channel.

Amplification

Amplification of an experience is an important technique to enter more deeply into the experience. An example of amplifying sensory-grounded information using channels

is when I begin to notice an experience in one channel, for instance visual. I can then look more closely at the light, colour, shape, where edges are defined and where they blur. Through close looking, my experience begins to amplify in a visual channel. I may notice the weight and solidity of a particular object that I'm drawn to. I try to feel that in my body and I notice a tendency to sink. My experience moves into proprioceptive and movement channels. In such moments, other channels of perception naturally join and my experience expands. I describe a colour dance experiment in detail on page 84 that has been essential to expand my feeling understanding of colour relationships. Amy Mindell elaborates when she says,

In order to unfold the process further, you can amplify experiences by "switching channels"- that is, by allowing your experience to express itself more fully in various modalities. For example, if you are seeing something, try feeling it in your body. If you are hearing something, try to express that sound in movement. (Mindell, 2005, p. 226)

In summary, three methods are described here. Firstly, I gather information grounded in my senses and notice what channel that experience is in. I amplify my experience in that one channel. Secondly, I globalise my experience by allowing other channels to join. By globalise, I mean that I enter a multi-channelled experience. Thirdly, I can also amplify my experience by consciously switching from one channel to another. This method of amplification is particularly useful for when I feel stuck in one channel. Through using my awareness I am consciously cultivating a state of consciousness that is beyond the comfort zone of my identity. My state of consciousness becomes altered as I shift viewpoints.

Shapeshifting

When my consciousness is altered, I experience a different sense of space and time. I enter into the world of my subject and I become the thing that caught my interest. I enter *its* world in order to understand its view, its way of being. From here I get a sense of how it wants to be painted, and its special quality that needs to be brought out. I have described this experience above when talking about rabbit. The ability to drop your identity and move into another experience of time and space is called shapeshifting. Shapeshifting is an age old skill utilised by shamans the world over. Arnold Mindell describes shapeshifting when he says:

In shapeshifting, shamans "shift" their experience from their human shape into the dreamland figures they are experiencing. . . . Shapeshifting involves letting go of your human form and becoming the sensation, object, demon, or animal that you have seen in a vision. Acting out a figure from one of your dreams in an authentic manner, truly feeling and moving like that figure, is a method of shapeshifting. (Mindell, 2000, p. 104)

Halifax gives ethnographic accounts of shamanic visionary narratives from around the world. (Halifax, 1979). Her survey contextualises human experience.

Along with fluidity, the metaskill of stillness is also necessary. Amy Mindell says, "to be fluid, we also need to both let go and remain centred, to give up forms and concepts and ride the waves of nature while maintaining a steady awareness that remains quiet in the flow of events" (1995, p. 157). Stillness in the centre of a flowing experience is an awareness that process work calls a metacommunicator. The ability to talk about the experience from

within the experience itself takes practice. It is necessary if the depth and nuance of an experience is to be recognised and communicated. A metacommunicator bridges the world within you to the world you perceive outside of you.

In summary, opening my senses, recognising sensory-grounded information, amplifying the experience in channels and shape shifting has helped me enormously in deepening the dimension of my painting practice. In order to make use of these skills, I have needed the metaskills of curiosity, play, fluidity and stillness. Lastly, I've needed to cultivate my metacommunicator to hone my communication about my art practice, from within my art practice. This helps me to pin down and clarify some of my experience and make it clear for other people.

Levels of Consciousness

Process work names three levels of consciousness. Consensus reality or CR is our everyday reality that we agree on. Here we think of objects and separated parts. Behind CR is Dreamland. This is the realm of our night-time dream events and where dreamfigures hang out. There is no consensus on this level because each person has a unique experience. In Dreamland, signals that we perceive within ourselves and outside ourselves are experienced as persistent or non flickering. An example is a body symptom that persists and usually disturbs us. The third level is the Essence level. Dreamfigures arise from here and we can trace them back to the Essence level by using our awareness.

Essence or Sentient Level

The Essence level is an awareness of oneness and unity. We return to a place where things are no longer reducible. While shapeshifting is an important skill for entering into different states of consciousness in Dreamland, a slightly different skill set is needed to access experiences at an Essence level. Valuing the 'not knowing' of a cloudy mind is the entry point to the Essence level. When we know something, we discount many subtle possibilities for experience. When we allow ourselves to become cloudy, we loosen our attachment to our identity and open up our senses to perceptions that are *almost* there. Signals that "barely reach the threshold of our awareness are described as 'flickering signals' or 'flirts' (Diamond & Spark Jones, 2004, p. 107). These experiences are very hard to describe and require stillness. They can occur in any of the six channels discussed above. The table below suggests the kinds of flirt experiences that occur in different channels.

Chanel	Flickering signal
VISUAL	quick fantasies/ images, shapes, colours, textures
AUDITORY	quiet, sudden, small sounds. Quality of voice. Background melody or sound
PROPRIOCEPTIVE	slight stirring, tick, pulse, pressure, twinge
KINAESTHETIC	tendencies towards motion or stillness
RELATIONSHIP	subtle aversion/ attractions, hesitations, moving forward or pulling back
WORLD	environmental phenomena or vague synchronicities

(Summarised from Diamond & Spark Jones, 2004, p. 108)

Chapter 5 contains examples of how I've made use of flirts to expand experiences by following movement tendencies, following urges to go certain places, noticing synchronicities and environmental phenomena. My experiences with light and colour have required all the skills discussed above.

Edges

Lastly, I want to discuss edges in more detail since they define our primary and secondary processes. Critical figures and belief systems hang around edges and limit our exploration into a mystery. Edges exist between channels of perception and between levels of experience. An example of an edge between channels is how I notice things primarily in a visual channel. I love looking closely at things. If I attribute a sound to a colour and begin to spontaneously sing the scene in front of me, I enter into a more secondary experience. I cross my edge and I enter into an altered state. In this way can make conscious use of changing channels to deepen experience. The other method I can make use of is fluidly shifting my awareness from consensus reality to dreamland and essence levels. These two methods have been key to exploring my childhood dream and deepening my painting practice. The next 2 sections are rich with examples.

Edges are sometimes equated with what is commonly known as 'artistic blocks'. While the concept of edges does encompass artistic blocks, it is also a junction rich with useful information. In Appendix 1, I discuss some methods that I have found useful to deal

with critics and artistic blocks. This is a brief section and can be explored further as a future direction.

Process work is a diverse practice with applications to many areas in life. In this chapter I have outlined some of the concepts and techniques within process work that I have found useful for my painting toolkit. In chapter 5, I describe in detail, how I've used this toolkit to deepen my painting practice. In the next chapter I give a structural analysis and experiential account of my childhood dream. I have used the concepts and techniques discussed so far to arrive at this.

CRACKED

CRACKED

CRACK! I shatter.

A cosmic tap. No defence.

Fragile pieces fall to earth,

Unstoppable.

I cannot pick up the pieces.

Seeping out of I, emerging from compartments.

My limits collapse into wonder.



Spreading dragon circles I.

A humming vortex in celebration.



CHAPTER 4. DIVING INTO MY CHILDHOOD DREAM

Dreams and the Dream Maker

Process work does not take an interpretive approach to dreams. Rather, it seeks to understand a dream through experiences within the dream itself. A dream is a mystery that baffles our everyday mind. We are perplexed because our viewpoint is only one part of the dream. Through experiences within the dream, we enter into altered states and begin to understand a dream from the viewpoint of the dream maker. The dream maker and *not the dreamer* is central to understanding (Mindell, 2001). Process work emphasises that dreaming is happening all the time and not just at night.

The key methods I have used to explore my childhood dream are as follows.

1. Pop-up, personal and collective associations to dreamfigures. This is in the realm of symbolic thinking.
2. Exploring the relationship between dreamfigures.
3. Making use of sensory-grounded information, channels of perception and shapeshifting to explore dreamfigures.
4. Utilising consensus reality research into cockroaches and medicine.
5. Weaving symbolic thinking into my personal, family and cultural history.
6. Finally, exploring the sentient experiences behind dreamfigures.

My childhood dream is as follows.

Childhood Dream

I'm in bed with my mum, dad and sister. We are all asleep. I wake up and go into the next room, rubbing my eyes. The wall between the bedroom and living area is covered with big black cockroaches. They take off and start flying around the room. I shake my head to get them out of my hair, screaming. My father comes into the room and begins squashing them on the wall with a shoe.

When I first became aware of this dream, I couldn't work out if it was a dream or a memory. My parents had no recollection of this event. However, it did not matter because process work considers your earliest dream or memory to represent a mythical pattern. I have explored my childhood dream many times over the last 15 years, and with different people. The layers of meaning have been a source of fascination and inspiration for me. Dreaming is a well spring that is inexhaustible. In this section I will present some of my understanding about the above dream.

The dream begins with all my family asleep and dreaming together. I associate bedrooms with intimacy; a place where I drop my identity and I am timeless. Sensing into the atmosphere more, a softness is present as a community dreams. There is an undifferentiated unity, containment and comfort. We breathe together in a wordless meditation. I recall my childhood in Pakistan where my family lived in an apartment. In the apartment block, people's doors were open and we could go to other kids' apartments to play. Other people would visit

us and food was always shared. My childhood memory of community is palpable and reflected in the above dream scene.

A wall separates this atmosphere of the bedroom to the living room. The living room is light and open. The wall represents an edge between an essence level of unified consciousness and dreamland, where differentiation is apparent. My identity wakes up when rubbing my eyes. My eyes and vision are important in seeing how the world is different from me. Here in the light, I see the wall is covered with big black cockroaches that take off and start flying around the room. They are not in formation like a swarm, but more like a tangle. They are constantly crossing each other's paths, yet don't bump into each other. The cockroach dreamfigure is my daimon or Ally. They are a tangle that I am terrified of.

Two aspects of my Ally catch my attention here. One is the cockroaches themselves and secondly, the tangled state. Firstly, cockroaches are marginalised by humanity and most people are repulsed by them. They hide in the dark and wear our projection of uncleanliness. While I have an 'icky' response towards a mass of cockroaches, I have also grown to have enormous respect for them through knowing more about them as creatures. As a dreamfigure they represent qualities and energies growing in me that challenge me to live my life potential.

Cockroaches are my teachers. They are ancient beings or elders that can survive almost anything. While humans have lived for about a million years, cockroaches go back 450 million years (Ronneberg & Martin, 2010, p. 224). That's a lot of evolution. They have

learned to survive through cleaning up and can eat almost anything. Contrary to common belief that they carry disease, cockroaches have never been known to infect anybody with anything. They have learned to live with humans because *we* are not very good at dealing with waste. Most cockroaches live in the soil and contribute to compost. They are part of our planet's recycling system. Through shapeshifting into cockroach consciousness I have learned to take in or ingest presences that I am disturbed by or that I'm curious about. In doing so I take that information into my being and my whole being works on it. I don't just think about it. Rather my body, dreams and the earth transforms it. I assimilate the disturbance and make it my own. It transforms in my system, I then have another viewpoint to understand the world, and to reflect on myself. It's my survival skill and way of cleaning up my environment. This important creative act is central to my painting approach and I will discuss it in depth in chapter 5.

Cockroaches have amazing resilience and adaptability. Scientists have recently found that the brains of cockroaches contain many different antibacterials and they have incredible immunity. Apart from modern western society, cockroaches are eaten worldwide for their medicinal properties. They are said to help a variety of digestive and lung problems when consumed internally, as well as skin lesions when crushed and used as a poultice (Copeland, 2003, section 4, loc. 936-959). They are farmed in China and are part of the pharmacopeia of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Here they are classified as a blood invigorator that moves masses like fibroids and clots (Bensky & Gamble, 1993, p. 292). In this sense, their energetic action is to break things up and encourage flow.

As an acupuncture practitioner, I can see how their healing properties have brought me to my profession. The cockroaches in my dream fly around the room like a tangled network. Central to TCM is the concept of Qi flowing in an open system of interconnected meridians. Our body meridian system is also holographic in nature. A microcosmic patterning co-exists on a macrocosmic level. Chinese medicine thinks in fields that are patterned, and this is fundamentally different to the causative approach taken by western medicine. While Taoist philosophy is at the heart of Chinese Medicine, it is also one of the building blocks of process work. In Taoism human beings are part of the flow of nature.

The flight of cockroaches in my dream also represents to me a way of thinking that has many viewpoints simultaneously. No one viewpoint has more relevance than any other. The whole of existence is always self reflecting. Respecting many viewpoints allows me to dissolve the self importance of my identity and appreciate other viewpoints in nature and within myself. Cockroaches are aspects of me that I sometimes identify with and sometimes marginalise. My life struggle is to have more relationship with these special powers in me and to recognise my encompassing identity. As I embrace this practice more, I become whole. My cockroaches are teaching me how to elder myself.

Lynn, the dreamfigure, is clearly disturbed by the flight of the cockroaches. She shakes her head to get them out of her hair. She feels her space is invaded. Through shaking her head, she goes into an altered state. Although my primary process identity is closely aligned with this dreamfigure, an altered state is implied through head shaking. When I shapeshift and go into this state through shaking my head, my hair is wild. I become wild and

my body begins to move and flow like the cockroaches. Through movement, I'm aware that this fluidity is very playful and unpredictable. Playfulness and fluidity are metaskills that my Ally is cultivating in me. Like the Lynn in the dream, my everyday identity is also challenged by this. Painting is a practice through which I open up to the mercurial quality of my Ally. I practice opening my senses and becoming very sensitive and fluid.

Cockroaches too, are incredibly sensitive. As Copeland (2003) points out, cockroaches have sensitive hairs on their legs and underside that pick up vibrations in the air for when a threat is apparent. Organs on their knee joints are tuned to the earth's internal vibrations and they can pick up an earthquake registering 0.07 on the Richter scale. Cockroaches try to keep themselves clean so they can remain sensitive (Copeland, 2003, section 1, loc. 318). These qualities of cockroach sensitivity encourage me to use all my senses to discover my environment and consequently my subject when painting. Cultivating this sensitivity is also necessary in the challenge of watercolour painting.

My father dreamfigure squashes these cockroaches with a shoe. While on one level my father in real life suppressed his sensitivity, he also loved to fly and worked for airline companies all his life. He trained to be a pilot as a young man until he ran out of money. He never got to fly a plane himself. My father came from a very poor background. He was well known for his determination and believed in fighting for his rights as a human being. When he had a point he would pin it down and there was no getting away. In the dream my father represents this quality of pinning down and fighting for existence on the margins of life. At times I've needed to squash my sensitivity and hurt to face challenges in life. He

represents a helper, providing me with a legacy for self belief and being bigger than I sometimes think I am. In my childhood dream, my father uses his shoe to pin things down and squash oppressive belief systems. My dreamfigure father helps me believe in the validity of my viewpoint and to come out in the world by squashing criticism.

It's also significant that my father uses his shoe. In western culture, shoes represent authority and status. "Rank and social standing were conveyed by specific features of the shoe" (Ronberg & Martin, 2010, p. 550). In the last couple of months of my father's life he told me about his first pair of shoes that his grandfather bought him second hand from the market in Karachi, Pakistan. He was six years old and the shoes were too small. He had to cut the front of his shoes off so that his toes would have room. The spirit of my father was too big for his shoes and the oppression that he lived through.

Shoes are also important to me as I have a passion for long distance walking. I love walking in the wilderness by myself and particularly going off track. To undertake these journeys, I've had to squash criticisms about my limitations as a woman. These are other people's fears and limitations that prevent me from discovering what my limitations really are. So I've learned to approach these journeys with openness and questions, and I try to recognise my beliefs. On these walks, I go slowly and lose myself in nature. In the wilderness I am a creature, no different to a lizard sunning herself, living with the consequences of the changing weather. My feet take me there. I have everything on my back, including my paint brushes, paper and acupuncture needles. The Taoist in me wonders in nature, within myself and in a

wilderness landscape. On these journeys, I feel completely at home. My approach to painting is something like this journey.

Lastly, it's the cockroaches that are splattered by the squash. Here the cockroaches represent the vulnerability I feel around my identity as a woman of colour in a same sex relationship who lives in a dominant white, heterosexual society. Sometimes I feel squashed or left out, but worst of all is when I do that to myself. When I marginalise my own vulnerability, I also marginalise my difference and I go against myself. Difference is a very obvious aspect of my lived life. I try to escape vulnerability, but sometimes there is nowhere to go. I am just vulnerable. My dreamfigure father is an aspect of me that pins this discomfort down, and I have to give voice to how vulnerable I feel, no matter how messy that is in the world. Without this voice, I don't exist anyway. In these moments, I'm learning to work with the eldership of my cockroach ancestry and hold a much bigger picture of humanity. It's a 450 million year old perspective of detachment that knows about the flickering existence of an individual identity before it disappears again, back to its source. From this viewpoint, it is consensus reality that is a flicker, not sentient experience. This viewpoint has a very different perspective on vulnerability. As an individual, I am aware of my fragile and short existence. When I have flashes of an ancient perspective, I remember my vast nature. Working with my childhood dream is teaching me how to live half in and half out of my humanity.

In this chapter I've demonstrated how my childhood dream runs through my life as a mythical pattern. While this pattern reflects my inheritance, it is also continuing and evolving through my living existence. The more closely I embrace it, the more freedom I

discover within myself. My painting project that is the foundation of this thesis, has given me the opportunity to embrace and closely follow my myth pattern. Here I have touched upon how my childhood dream influences my painting process. The next chapter will explore this in depth.

HIDDEN GORGE & DRAGON SURGE

HIDDEN GORGE

Engorged and swollen, thoughts slow down.
My head turns to toffee, glowing within.
Breathing. . .
Dreaming Hidden Gorge. . .
A space to be.
Impatience creates time.
Light finds a crack.
Escape!



DRAGON SURGE

Dragon rages through my body earth.
She is a force of reckoning.
Travelling along a knife's edge,
Scintillating and alive.
Surging to my surface from within,
She erupts through my skin.

I am a dragon travelling within earth,
Soaring through the cosmos,
Between life and death.
I am a force that interconnects.
A pure wave beyond boundaries.
At my eruption, know your existence,
And remember you are more. . .



In a shocking moment, it dawns on rabbit that she is two dimensional!

CHAPTER 5. PAINTING AS A METHOD OF EXPLORATION

In this section of the thesis I reflect on my artistic practice. My choice of watercolour as a medium, and the formal elements of picture construction are important to me as an artist. They have also been shaped by my dreaming process as shown below. Picture-making is a language that I constantly wrestle with in order to convey a message. The message is rarely consciously known to me. In making a picture, I'm unveiling something through playing with the unknown. Painting is a process of revelation. I am always thinking about the formal elements of composition and how they interact on a page. A white page is a field for marks, tone, shape, colour and light to create drama. All paintings, including abstract works can be understood through a formal lens. These formal elements are the language of picture-making. They offer us a naming that breaks down perception in a visual channel. They are also the beginnings of amplifying experience in the visual channel and this is an important contribution that art practice makes to Process Work. I think the language of formalism when applied to the visual channel is akin to what Arye describes as sub-channels when he discusses the auditory channel (2001, p. 60-61). Working with formalism alone will not make great art, but understanding more about how a language operates is helpful in the construction and communication of visual poetry.

Poetics

I think poetry is created at the edge of where our perceived identity interfaces with the world. At this juncture, sensory information is juxtaposed in unexpected ways through associations and we give expression to the experience through the structure of our identity. Poems are created through the unique viewpoint of our identity. Self-reflection refines poetic language. As Diamond and Spark Jones point out, "poetic language is deliberately inexact. Rather than conveying precise information, it evokes feelings, memories and sensations" (Diamond and Spark Jones, 2004, p. 116). A clear illustration of this is Jean-Michael Basquiat and his artistic process. He was a self-taught graffiti artist who always painted with the television on and a constant party around him (Koh et. al., 2010). Over his lifetime, his paintings got more layered with meaning as they became self referential. His identity as a young black man in America was a filter for what was happening around him, as something in him chose what to include, and what to leave out. Basquiat created his own iconic language over time. It seems to me that this layered juxtaposition is at the core of making art in a world full of information.

Small Paintings

I've chosen to produce a series of small paintings that together form one large painting. They are the views of my Ally. These paintings, with their accompanying poems, appear at the start of each chapter within this thesis. Each painting is 29.5 cm x 25.5 cm. There is a joy in producing many paintings in an attempt to keep up with the imagination running through me. I feel I'm able to pin so little of it down and hold my focus there. I reflect

on my father in my childhood dream and his role of pinning down the chaotic flight of cockroaches. Painting is nearly a daily practice. Working small and in a very nonlinear way has allowed this project to proliferate on a wall in a way similar to my cockroach Ally. Painting small means the majority of my paintings don't make it into this project, but have served the purpose of exploring the different energies of my childhood dream through feeling, colour and mark-making. These are mostly abstract flowing pieces that have kept me closely connected to my childhood dream. I have noticed how well I feel in myself when painting these works. When I share them with other people I refer to them as my 'wellness paintings'. On pages 77 are some examples.

I've been familiarising myself with the essential energies within my childhood dream and observing how they are naturally present when I paint. For instance, the bedroom scene in my childhood dream has an atmosphere of intimacy, softness and breathing together in unity. After meditating on these qualities, I painted the images on page 77. This mind space is also necessary for me to work with watercolour as described on page 82. The central dreamfigure in my childhood dream are cockroaches. When I use the term 'cockroach dreaming' a number of qualities are encompassed. The mindset behind cockroach dreaming at first appears as a tangled state of confusion, like Lynn in the dream. As I enter the mindset more deeply, I sense a flow within a network that holds many viewpoints. I feel the flow as my body begins to move unpredictably. Awareness is in my arms and legs, and somehow they are aware of their positions in relation to each other in space. The flow is non-linear. This sense of flow also offers detachment from a fixed viewpoint. It is readily seen in the paintings on page 79. In my childhood dream the flow of cockroaches is put to a sudden stop by my

father hitting his shoe on the wall. The cockroach splatters, the flow is disrupted and has to reorganise itself. I have used splattering paint to disrupt the flow and harmony on the paper. I tap my loaded paintbrush with my finger or flick my wrist. I do this when I feel the flow becoming too predictable and too controlled. The disruption introduces variety and a new challenge. I feel it keeps my painting fresh and loose. The painting on page 79 began with a big splatter (or a challenge) and I had to work with that. I used this same challenge as the starting point for the second ninja turtle painting on page 105.

I've relinquished the question of 'my style'. It's like I'm a conduit for certain energies to paint through me. I'm always intrigued when I see a retrospective of an artist's work and how a core sensibility runs through their oeuvre. In the paintings on pages 77 and 79 I'm freely playing with different kinds of marks and feeling into each brush stroke. I prepare for painting by meditating on the energies in my childhood dream and allow my body to follow the experiences that arise. I describe my movement experiments in the section on 'The choice of watercolour as a medium'. Paintings like the ones below have allowed me to loosen up and be very precise when I commit to a mark of a particular colour. As this project expanded into painting tiny objects, my brush marks had to feel right. I have continued to make these paintings in tandem with the 16 small paintings and poems presented as *Views From my Ally*.

WELLNESS PAINTINGS

These are examples of paintings that I make to keep me in-touch with the energies in my child dream. I have made hundreds of them.



Below are examples of paintings produced when I focus on the quality of the soft intimacy of my sleeping family.



After meditating in movement on my cockroaches, the following painting emerged.



Watercolour as a medium really lends itself to splattering and flicking paint. These are examples of welcoming the splatter challenge.



On Composition

This project has certainly been challenging to compose. The challenge is present in two ways. Firstly, each small painting within the 16 paintings forming *Views From my Ally*, is a composition in its own right. The second challenge was maintaining compositional continuity from one painting to the next when each painting has evolved in a non-linear sequence. I've been challenged to hold a microscopic and macroscopic viewpoint simultaneously when considering the overall composition. While composition is about the overall design of a painting, it is also about how a message is conveyed, an atmosphere created, and how a viewer is led on a journey through a pictorial space. Each picture is a shared journey between me and my viewer. Composition is core to the poetry in pictures. For me, composition is not an intellectual exercise as it has to feel right in my body. My whole body is a sensory organ that knows something before my identity does. Many artists call this a 'gut feeling'. For me it's letting myself merge with the field that is before me, and feeling my whole body as that field.

Painting is an inside/ outside practice. Since my intention has been to consciously hold cockroach dreaming in the background and the overall composition is about many viewpoints looking into myself, I am aware of how integral my experience of cockroach dreaming is to the composition of this project. Internally, my body is in a reciprocal relationship with my painting practice. The act of painting and feeling keeps me well in my body. Each small painting is like an arrangement of my wellbeing, regardless of whether I am

in discomfort or not. Further, each small painting is a kind of self-portrait. My dreambody and mythbody seek alignment through the expression of painting.

The Choice of Watercolour as a Medium

I haven't always been a watercolour painter. Prior to these small works, I had been working on large-scale drawings using chalk pastels and acrylic paint. Both pastels and acrylics are stiffer mediums that offer more control for a painter. One has a lot more control over the drying time and physical manipulation for the blending of pigments. A painting is usually built up from dark to light and mistakes are easily erased. In fact erasure and refinement is key to this method of painting. With watercolour, the process for laying down pigment is reversed. This is because watercolour is a transparent medium so it's crucial to work from light to dark and build up a painting in layers. This method is less forgiving when mistakes are made and the challenge is to work with water and help it to do the work. I was drawn to return to the fluidity of watercolour to engage more with the unpredictability of water and colour. The fluidity of cockroach dreaming has led me to this challenge. Painting with watercolour is a very different experience to working with oils, acrylic paints or pastels.

Since the nature of water is fluid and unpredictable I've had to learn to understand water and its flow in order to work with it. All my sensitivity is brought to this field when I study the water on the page in relation to the water in my brush. When there is more water in my brush, the pigment disperses. When there is less water in my brush than on the page, my marks have a more definite shape. I study the sheen on the page and the weight of my brush.

Feeling and looking closely follow each other. There are other variables in this dance that include different pigment qualities, the type of brush I'm using for my intention, the kind of paper and air humidity. Watercolour painting is an act of lightly guiding the flow of water on a page and constantly monitoring it. I've noticed how I keep my brush in contact with the paper for as long as I can as this guides the water. I can also affect the flow of water by working with gravity and tilting my page to different angles. When water is laid down, a field for interaction is created. My concern here is to describe my experience of painting. There are many books on watercolour technique that have been written. A couple that I have found particularly useful are by Hoffman (2012) and Dobie (1986).

Originally artists' pigments came from the earth. These days dyes are often used to substitute some coloured earth pigments. Dyes have different properties and while they expand the possibilities of watercolour painting, they also behave differently to earth pigments on the paper. More than any other painting medium, it is essential to understand pigment quality when painting in watercolour due to its transparent nature. Unpredictable things happen and it's a challenge to find ways to work with that occurrence. My intention and water paint a painting. Dreaming enters through unpredictable doorways and noticing what is happening in the present moment is the key. My senses are alive! In communicating my experience of sensitivity, I recall the sensitivity of cockroaches to movements of air and vibrations within the earth. This is a description of a sentient experience where I have closely studied the signals of water, air and earth until the signals are persistent and become part of me. At its core, watercolour painting is alchemy.

I have the perception of watercolour painting as 3 dimensional. Pictures are built up with transparent, fluid layers of colour. In fact some colours just can't be mixed. Rather pigments sit on top of each other like filters, and the glow of the white paper emanates through. When painting with watercolours, I'm always thinking ahead about how the flow of colour in layers can connect up. The 3 dimensional flight path of cockroach dreaming has helped me to understand the spatial experience between layers of paint. I conducted an experiment within the 3 dimensional space of a room and let my body move through the anticipated layers of colour. Sometimes I imagined colours sitting in different layers as I stood in different parts of the room. I felt into the colour as a vibration and shapeshifted into it, allowing the vibration to move my body. It was like dancing through the painting and moving into different qualities of colour. I was not aware of how intentional my dance was. My posture and perceived vibration changed as I entered into the imagined flow of colour within the room. As I danced for a while, I noticed that I am colour creating my own shape, or perhaps I'm shaped by where I'm placed in the room and the colours I imagine around me. I am pulled in another direction. I flow, and through flowing my shape and colour changes. This movement painting experiment allowed me to feel colour and its placement in an overall space, or field. Some of my wellness paintings seen above have been produced while holding this mind-set.

Feeling colour is sensory and emotive. For instance, a cobalt blue is soft and round, whereas a pthalo blue is powerful and harsh. Pthalo blue makes strong statements because of the nature of the colour, and as a staining dye. Yet all colours are relative to the colours around them and their natures are modified through mixing. This dance also led me to

study the works of Rothko and Bonnard who both made use of shifting planes of colour to create pictorial space. I have found that in allowing myself to move and dance, I get a clearer sense of the quality of colours and their relationship to each other in space. Movement helps me to amplify these qualities.

So far I have discussed how the energies in my childhood dream are integral to watercolour painting. The very nature of the medium has called me, as it allows for an amplification of the energies in my childhood dream. This amplification has allowed me to develop particular sensitivities as a painter that are within my childhood dream. Simply put, watercolour painting is a necessary practice to discover qualities within my childhood dream, and these qualities are necessary for me to develop as a watercolour painter.

Light and Space

I came to this method of dancing through my paintings through a series of dreams. The first dream is as follows.

Dr Helen Magnus (from the TV series 'Sanctuary') is in a car with a thing in the back that is half creature, half device. She is driving the car. The device keeps taking over people that Magnus knows. As long as the creature doesn't recognise her she can make use of it. It's looking for her.

When I consider this dream the Magnus in me is a wise scientist who studies phenomena. She represents the Metaskill of experimentation to discover the working limits of

things. But she is like an aspect of my primary process. The disturbing thing is the device. When I shapeshifted into being the device, I became my iPad that opened up. Light streamed forth. I radiated light and lost my identity. My body took on the posture of a star as I laid on the ground in an open surrender. This dream taught me to open myself up as light and study the subtleties of my perception. I can then reflect on my perception and use artistic device (or the formal language of picture-making) to portray an experience. I am surrendering to the expansion of my perception and learning about my own nature as light. I began to closely observe how light operated, firstly by studying how light moves through layers of transparent pigment (as described in the painting dance above). Then I considered how to make use of formal visual language to portray light and colour in my paintings.

Around this time I was limiting myself to abstract works while holding a sense of my childhood dream in the background as described above and seen in my wellness paintings. However, I felt a little bored with my abstract gestural practice and painting was feeling a little mechanical. I needed something more. I wanted to see if these sensibilities in my childhood dream and paintings so far could somehow be present if I painted the world around me. So I returned to studying light in nature. I was encouraged by another dream as follows:

I am in a painting group with my watercolours. I am showing them to a woman who is an art teacher. I tell her my idea of putting them together to form paintings as big as the oil paintings on the wall. She looks a little unsure, or unconvinced. She is dressed as someone from the 1960s in a day glow orange dress with lime green gerberas all over it.

In the dream, the large painting on the wall was like a de Kooning. I am drawn to de Kooning's soft, loose and curvaceous paintings of the 1960s. For me they have a spaciousness that isn't present in his earlier work. Something of my cockroach path attracts me to his sensibility during this period. But my dream art teacher was doubtful of this path. Her day glow dress gave me the message to not forget about light. 'The form and gesture are one thing, but focus on the light and space' was her message. Another significant thing about her dress was that the gerberas were green, in an orange field. It appeared to me that the object and field are reversed. My task is clearly to study light as the field. Around this time I began to see the world a little differently. My perception shifted from seeing the world as solid form, to seeing the world as glowing light and colour.

I became obsessed with light and realised that more than observation and theory is needed. I had to shapeshift into the 'device' in the dream with Magnus described above, and deepen into a sentient experience. I've had to become light and glow. In watercolour painting, the glow of the white paper and transparent layers of colour enables me to study light in a unique way. I am not painting in light. Rather, I start with light and I paint in transparent colour. Becoming the light has helped me enormously in understanding dark areas in a painting. Darks are not the absence of light, or one solid flat colour. Rather they are rich with variations of reflected light, and help to define space. This has led me to consider the nuances of colour in shadows and how subtle colour and tonal shifts give depth to the picture plane. I have no formulas for this, only my curiosity and playfulness. Light is a sensibility that my dreams are cultivating. My paintings are like a field of light that coalesces into forms. In this sense light is like a unified consciousness that differentiates into form.

I recall the unity of the bedroom scene and Lynn walking into the next room, rubbing her eyes. Here the cockroaches enter into a spacial dance with themselves and engage Lynn. It is like the sentient and dreaming levels in my childhood dream are layers of paint. I am experiencing my childhood dream as a field of light through which colour dances. Watercolour allows me to express this through layers of paint.

Discovering the content

In the previous section I described my sentient exploration of painting, beyond technical skill. It is the sensibility that informs my technical skill. I think this sentient experience is like the sensibility of the bedroom scene in my childhood dream. Form arises from a unified field. The content is like the diversity in the living room of my childhood dream. In this section I would like to discuss how the content of this project has evolved.

One day, I was cleaning on top of a low dusty bookcase. A menagerie of tiny objects lives on this bookcase. Little ornaments collected over many years and many travels. They belong to both me and my partner and some of these objects hold the sentimental value of memories. After the shelf was clean, I had fun grouping the objects into little scenarios. The objects began to take on relationships and I sensed a conversation in my imagination. The conversation had no words, but reflected feeling states. When I looked down on the shelf, I could see many scenes happening at the same time, each with a different atmosphere. I was fascinated by the impact a mirror had on a small bowl, or how 10cm tall ceramic pots loomed

ominously over a little wooden egg shaped rabbit. I sat with this experience for a few days before I began to draw. I was at an edge to cross the threshold into a dreamy state.

Drawing is a way of thinking for me where placement and the space between objects is important in a picture plane. Space describes a lot about the relationship between two or more things, as well as the object's relationship to itself. It also sets up a relationship with the viewer as part of the interaction. The truly magical thing about pictures is how the scale of one object can change in relation to another, and this has psychological impact on us as the viewer. Magical or dreamlike spaces are created. For instance, Kwan Yin is a small drawing on the side of a tiny bell. Yet in the paintings titled "Kwan Yin's Dance" (see page 23), she has a presence that fills the atmosphere, leading rabbit into an altered state. The stories in my paintings are my stories. They reflect the inner narrative of my life. These tiny objects flirted with me and I entered into their world, their relationships. I found that this world was in conversation with my inner world. The world was reflecting me.

When I've drawn to compose these paintings, I've held these objects in my hand, felt them and considered them from different angles. Sometimes I hold them closer, sometimes further way and sense what imagination wants to do with them. Sometimes I will set up a scene and consider it from different angles. At times I've combined the two methods described here.

Essentially I'm playing with the many possible imaginative viewpoints in my childhood dream and I'm asking imagination 'where do these things want to be on this page?

In that placement, what are they trying to say?'. The chaos of my flying cockroach ideas are trying to land and arrange themselves in some way. This second question is never clear but evolves through drawing and then painting. The development of each painting is slow and considered like I'm holding a mystery waiting to reveal itself. I am trying to pin the idea down through paint. Drawing releases the tiny objects from their object-ness and tiny-ness. When drawing, I look for the imprecise lines and what they are tending to do. I amplify them on my page and in doing so, spatial relationships between objects change. The field of a page is very fluid and full of imaginative potential. Images arise if you encourage them and pay attention. Holding a question in front of a blank page full of potential is what is known as a blank access in process work. It allows for imagination to enter as an organisational force.

In some ways my practice of drawing is similar to sand play. Sand play is a therapeutic tool "used to objectify the contents of imagination and to study the healing and growth process itself" (Schuitevoerder, 1992, p. 57). A person chooses some tiny figures from a shelf of many and arranges a scene in a tray of sand. "An unconscious problem is played out in the sand box, just like a drama" (Schuitevoerder, 1992, p. 56). It's a non-verbal way of working through a life situation. In her paper, "Enlivening Sandplay Through Process Work", Schuitevoerder says,

sandplay mainly utilises the visual channel in which the picture is created as a visual experience. . . By picking up on visual representation the other channels of experience could be introduced, the particular channel to be introduced depending on the signals of the client. (1992, p. 59)

I think my drawings differ from sandplay in two ways. Firstly, characters are found through the act of drawing them. The accidents of my pencil contribute to character formation. Characters are drawn out and become personalised. Secondly, as my viewpoint changes with the scale of my subjects in a magical space, I begin to feel my characters. Feeling and drawing intertwine, and I am in the picture plane. My picture is like my sand tray beginning to come alive and I am in it.

As I feel into the imprecision of my drawings, space pulls and tugs me in different directions. I need to get up and move, taking up the feeling sense of my subject. My experience naturally becomes globalised. Looking and feeling intertwine and then I have to move. I become my subjects and play them out. In this sense cockroach dreaming flies off a 2 dimensional surface and fills the room as interplay. Many different viewpoints begin to interact and meet each other on their relationship paths. I often jot down little notes about my experience as different characters. Sometimes I have video recorded my solo performance and have studied these relationships to take the narrative further. I've learned that the more I understand the feelings between viewpoints, the more feeling enters into my paintings of 'inanimate' objects. I also realise that essentially I am painting myself, inside out. I notice the objects that flirt with me and then imagination takes me into dreamland. The many viewpoints on the wall are viewpoints into me.

Through drawing I compose the relationship dynamics within a picture. I then design my paintings through simplified colour studies. This is an important step because

colour introduces feeling and atmosphere. Only once I'm clear about the overall design as a felt experience can I paint freely. This whole process feels like an adventure to me.

The Paintings

So far I have talked about how tiny objects called me to paint them. After a few months I began to notice they entered into my night-time dreams and I would feel pulled to certain places. My sense of adventure was growing. For instance, while I was painting the rabbit going down into the earth, I experienced myself as rabbit and then as the earth (see page 47). I had a strong craving to go to a place that is special to me called Hidden Gorge. Hidden Gorge is part of a gorge system that is in the Southern Flinders Ranges of South Australia. I have camped in this place many times and taken many photographs. The gorge is not very wide or very high. Yet I feel myself held inside a wound within the earth. I usually walk in and carry water for a few days supply. There I'm completely by myself, in the earth. Rather than go there physically, I tried to reconstruct my experience from memory and a sense of the ancient spirit of the place. Time slows down and verbal thoughts are rare when I'm in this place. I imagined myself as an ancient spirit as I painted this painting. I felt that spirit in me (see page 71). Hidden Gorge holds the same energy and atmosphere as the bedroom scene of my childhood dream.

A few weeks later I noticed a teapot with a dragon on it flirting with me and started drawing it, letting imagination and dreaming turn it over. Around this time an incident happened with a friend where I felt unseen in our relationship, and was hurt. I knew I had to

go to Hidden Gorge to sort myself out. On the third day of my camp, a hot north wind blew through the gorge. It was very dry and uncomfortable. To ease my discomfort, I allowed myself to merge with the wind. As I moved like the wind, the dragon I was painting emerged and raged around, spitting in all directions. I made a lot of noise in this wound in the earth and the spirit of Hidden Gorge held me. In my catharsis I realised that I can take up space without apology, for I too am a creature of this earth. This experience was liberating and permission giving. I could finish my dragon painting as I had embodied and understood my power (see page 71). It also changed how I felt about my friend in that I understood something of her wound and ferocity. She was like a reflection of me. I was fascinated by the sequence of events, because I was called into my wound and was playing with the emergence of dragon energy before the incident with my friend. This makes me aware of how dreams show patterns before they manifest in life. It seems to me that consensus reality and dreamland are constantly interacting with each other. It also appears to me that my dreambody and mythbody are interwoven. The need for dragon energy to take up space is like the flight of cockroach dreaming filling a room.

Upon returning I had the following dream.

Dragon on the teapot on a diagonal path. The wind outside is created by the dragon. Cupcake wrappers tossed and rolling in the dragon's wake.

My experience in the gorge told me that my direction was clear and to take up the space I need. In this dream a diagonal direction does not skirt around the perimeter but rather, cuts across a space directly. It encourages me to be direct in this situation. Directness has a

similar energy to my father squashing and splattering cockroaches. This dream also offers a spiritual attitude or metaskill of hosting the relationship with my friend, like I would a tea party. I was able to embody the lightness and transparency of the cupcake wrappers through carefully painting them. Carefully painting the qualities I experience helps me to ground their message. When I apply this relationship to myself alone, I'm learning how to host a relationship with the world through my Earth presence. The metaskills of lightness and transparency can manifest when I don't have anything against my dragon powers. There is a directness in their manifestation. My dragons then appear relatively small to me, as my viewpoint has shifted to identifying with the Earth. I am Hidden Gorge (see page 97). When I reflect on my experience of watercolour painting as discussed earlier, I realise that I am light hosting a dance of transparent colour. I glimpse the energies of my childhood dream underneath and within the content of these paintings.

I have not directly analysed the content of each small painting in relation to my childhood dream as I've wanted to preserve the poetry of my Ally's views. Rather, I have focused on working with the energies within my childhood dream (as discussed on pages 75 and 76) and observed how they paint through me. For instance, the atmospheric quality in Kwan Yin's Dance (see page 23) or Hidden Gorge (see page 71) is similar to the bedroom scene of unity in my childhood dream. If the viewer looks closely at the transparent painterly marks in a paintings like Eye Stories (see page 107), the flight of cockroaches may be seen. As mentioned earlier, I try to leave my brush on the page for as long as possible to guide the flow of water. This is present in all my paintings as it is inherent in how I handle watercolour. This is not a method. It is what I have observed of myself painting. Splattering is seen in a

number of the 16 paintings. In particular look at the second Ninja Turtle painting on page 105, or Dragon Surge (see page 71). The same energy can be witnessed in the content of the painting Cracked (see page 59). These references are suggestions for the viewer to begin engaging with the Views From my Ally paintings and make your own discoveries.

I wasn't able to plan the sequences of small paintings. I could only focus on two paintings at a time. The one I was working on and the anticipated one to come. But once those two were complete, more paintings wanted to join them. Sometimes they would fit in-between and the sequence would be altered or new scenarios would arise.

I generally don't look at my paintings much. I keep them in a box and only take them out when a new one is complete. Then I want an overview of the entire sequence. When I finish a painting, I keep it in my bedroom for a couple of weeks and study it over tea in bed in the morning. I feel myself as an Earth presence viewing my manifestation. I am very detached and I wait. Gradually, phrases come up as I feel into the painting and a section of a poem will slowly appear. To pull the poem together, I need to have the sequence of paintings before me. Only then am I able to connect to the flow of the poem. My paintings are not illustrations, but are alive. I have used poetry to reflect on the paintings. Poems tie viewpoints together through sequences and a narrative speaks to a CR level. The entire painting also operates through associations. Associations happen when more than one viewpoint is present simultaneously. In this sense the entire painting is also understood through dreaming, and is in conversation with the viewer. My cockroaches invite interplay.

The viewer

In this artwork I am inviting the viewer on a journey through a dreaming process. There are no right or wrong interpretations on this journey, but an open space to not know and to feel what is evoked. It's an invitation to watch your night-time dreams after viewing our shared journey, and to discover how dreaming self-reflects through 'my' childhood dream. I recall the first scene of my childhood dream where there is an atmosphere of community dreaming. My recommendation is to take time and feel into the spaces.

An abstract painting will react to you if you react to it. You get from it what you bring to it. It will meet you half way but no further. It is alive if you are. It represents something and so do you. YOU, SIR, ARE A SPACE, TOO.



Reinhardt, (1947).

TRANSPARENCY

TRANSPARENCY

In my body earth
I hold my dragons lightly.
With transparency.
In a ceremony with tea, they surface.
With flesh, blood and feeling
I sit to watch a drama.
Wind, dragons and flying cupcake wrappers,
My rabbit in the wings, waiting pensively.
Within body earth,
The drama is transparent.



CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION

This project has been a sinuous journey with dreaming and consensus reality, explored through paint. I have shown how the essential energies present in my childhood dream are inherent within the atmospheres and marks I make when I paint. Holding my awareness of these energies while I have painted over the last two years has been a way of amplifying my awareness of them. They shape my painting 'style' and sensibility as much as they run through my way of being in the world. They have led me to the medium of watercolour to make themselves known to me. They operate in the background of my painting and innerwork process. The non-linear organisation of my Ally has manifested 16 viewpoints into my inner-life. At the end of this project, I feel that my childhood dream is intrinsic to my unique voice as a painter.

In documenting my painting process for this project, I have shown the relationship between painting and dreaming. I hope to help my reader think beyond painting technique as something only to be learned by instruction and feel limited to it. Or conversely, to think that learning technique is not needed at all. Certainly the language of formalism provides important distinctions for amplification in a visual channel, and I feel that technical skill is important for my self-expression. Although I have focused on my childhood dream I have found dreaming to be my central instructor. My dreams have shown me what I need to learn, and how I should go about it. I have seen how the energies and figures of my night time

dreams relate to my childhood dream. In essence, I am a field of light in a transparent colour dance. My life long journey has been to get myself out of the way and surrender to what is trying to emerge. This is true in art as well as life.

Contributions to the field

In the literature review section I have pulled together the development of Mindell's thinking around childhood dreams and contextualised it within the field of psychology. I have not come across an exploration like this in my readings to date as little research has been done on childhood dreams. Consequently, this contribution serves as a foundation for further research as Mindell's thinking evolves within the field of process work. I am also aware that this literature review is not exhaustive of all the research conducted. It is a presentation of what has influenced my thinking.

I have contextualised my arts-based research within the field of psychology to bridge the relationship between art and psychology. These two disciplines have not sat so comfortably with each other historically, both entrenched in a pathology of altered states of consciousness. It appears to me that while the art world does not want to be marginalised and seeks cultural relevance, psychology also seeks legitimacy in aligning itself with scientific research. Both disciplines want validation in consensus reality, sometimes at the cost of pathologising dreaming itself. Jung faced this dilemma when his secondary process told him in a female voice that he was making art while he thought he was conducting a scientific

experiment with the unconscious. Despite the beautiful paintings within *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009), Jung never considered it to be a work of art.

Through this project I have tried to stimulate conversation between the practices of art and psychology. Creative art practices liberate psychology from verbal conversation and a need to know something. Through art we enter into a mysterious dialogue with the unknown. I have shown how painting is a process of revelation. On the other hand process work is a school of thought that values dreaming, altered states of consciousness *and* consensus reality. It has a viewpoint that offers valuable methods to deepen art practice, work with dreaming and find your authentic voice. This project is a contribution to the field of art practice in that I have documented my innerwork journey with paint, while providing a process work language and method for an art practice audience.

I have also made a contribution to process work by documenting amplification in a visual channel through using the language of formalism. This is a fine distinction that painting theory has to offer process work. Through focusing on the energies of my childhood dream for a two-year period, I have presented a way to work with one dream over a long period of time. To my knowledge, no other writer has undertaken this task. I have shown how painting is an alchemical process involving a dialogue with night-time dreams. The raw elemental materials of earth (pigments), water and air (atmosphere) are cooked through awareness and dreaming into painting light. Further, I have demonstrated the difference between a sentient approach to painting and a dreamland approach. Central to my painting process is the method of shapeshifting. Although my paintings are small, my whole body has

been involved through sense perception, amplification in channels (the movement channel in particular), dreams and body symptoms, as well as the physical act of painting. I have presented painting as an embodied experience. My example indicates a starting point for others to explore their childhood dream in depth.

Limitations and future directions

This project has one obvious limitation. My study is very subjective and I am not studying the childhood dreams of other artists in relation to their practice. Through the method of arts-based research this study exists as an example of one person's approach to working with their childhood dream through the medium of watercolour. A future direction for research is to discover the implications of other people's mythical patterns and how it works through their art practice. The field of art is diverse and many people work in a variety of media.

I have worked with the energies of my childhood dream in my painting process. I wanted to discover more about how I naturally paint. I started by focusing on wellness paintings. Then my night time dreams coupled with a natural boredom with what I was doing led me to observe the world more closely until tiny objects flirted with me. I followed the dreaming in the moment and the content of the 16 views arose. I have not tried to illustrate my childhood dream and so I cannot make a direct analysis of the content within the small paintings in relation to my childhood dream. I see some parallels exist. This is a limitation I have chosen so the paintings preserve their life and mystery.

I have also located and contextualised this paper in the field of process work using arts-based research. I have not overtly located it in contemporary art practice. While this project can exist within the cultural framework of contemporary art, I have chosen this limitation for now in order to focus on my inner workings as an artist while closely following my childhood dream. To satisfactorily do both would make the project too large. A dialogue within contemporary art is best left for another paper.

In this paper, I have introduced the concept of formalism as the language of picture-making to process work. It is just a beginning and could be extended a lot further. The topic could be purely an exploration of the visual channel, expanding on how perception happens and further ways to amplify visual experiences.

I have also not embarked on a discussion within the field of art therapy. I wanted to hold my focus on process work and my art practice. It has been important to me to share something of my painting process as a painter, not as a therapist or a client. I am fascinated by reading the approach of other artists to their practice. Painting is a very precious study for me that is cooking over decades. I wanted to write about something beyond exercises that may help others. Having said that, future research could go in the direction of childhood dreams and art therapy.

Final comments

This painting project has satisfied a long-term yearning in me. I realise I needed to do it to understand the theory behind childhood dreams, work closely with my mythical dance, explore the way I perceive the world and discover how I naturally paint. Following the dreaming journey behind this painting has given me the sense of stepping out of time to view my existence, my family's history and my relationship with the world. I have connected with something very deep in myself and have relinquished the responsibility of creating anything. I've come to realise that I am surrounded by imagination. It is a fluid space-time that I enter into, because it is not mine to own. I am not responsible for it. The more closely I can follow, the lighter I am. Dreaming is something the universe does and I am a flicker in it. Remembering this sets me free. I am but one viewpoint, and I can shift my viewpoint and therefore my identity. I am my Ally. I am also the fluid ground of being that holds many views.

NINJA TURTLE

NINJA TURTLE

Building conversation.

Information floats in billowing clouds.

I am armed and vulnerable,

Quivering above floating words.

Letters with hooks make no sense.

Chop, chop chop! I chop to STOP.



Chop chop choppa,

I've come a croppa.

Words caught in my churning gut.

I wrestle them.

Tearing them apart.

They disintegrate. . .

My eyes float off in surprise!

Admire my struggle



EYE STORIES

EYE STORIES

Cumulus Congestus, a vertical ascent.

I rage above the earth, swarming.

Dense crushing, lightning spit.

Rebellion is at hand.

I ache, in a hope for rain.



In the eye of the storm,

A still space.

Tears flow to fill my cup half empty.

My eye turns pasture green.

Seeking. . .



APPENDIX 1. REFLECTIONS ON CREATIVE BLOCKS

In this appendix I wanted to include some approaches that I have found useful to deal with the creative blocks that every artist faces. Some critical 'broken records' in me say, 'is that idiosyncratic thing that you are doing relevant to anyone? Most people will find it boring, or think that you are trying too hard. Art isn't of use to anyone anyway!' In response I feel my rebellion rising up to this voice and at times I feel the unresolvable conflict like a weight on me. I've found the following things really useful to help me through my edges to paint.

Firstly, the above mentioned metaskills of curiosity and playfulness are invaluable to get me started, coupled with the belief that creativity is not mine to own. Rather I surrender my identity to nature and follow where my awareness takes me.

Beyond this I have been helped by the advice of artist Michelle Cassou (2001). She encourages the asking of questions around creative blocks. She suggests building questions out of the blocks we are experiencing. In this way, questions are designed to clear a permission giving space for feeling our feelings in the moment. Such questions may begin as follows:

What if I didn't have to do . . . ?

What if it didn't matter if I did . . . ?

What if I could let myself feel . . . ?

What if it was OK to . . . ? (Cassou, 2001, p. 33)

By adding in the judgement or fear, we clear a space for the unexpected to enter. For example, if I am terrified of creating a disaster on a white page, my question may be, 'what if I was to throw caution to the wind and create a disaster?' There's a powerful energy that needs to be expressed. I can then tune into that energy and paint like the wind.

Cassou (2001) also describes 3 main edge figures that she calls dragons, and it important to build our questions out of these. They are as follows.

1. The dragon of product, which is attached to expectations of success and failure. This attitude kills openness and freedom of expression as an end product is expected.
2. The dragon of control prevents us from exploring our spontaneity.
3. The dragon of meaning seeks interpretation and prevents entry into a mystery (Cassou, 2001).

These critical figures are general and nuances exist within them. I have found it useful to have them named and to hold recognition of them in my mind while I paint. I also want to emphasise here that not all critical figures are harmful or limiting. Sometimes what appears as critical to us can also be an encouragement to grow in unexpected ways. To discover this we need the time to listen, along with courage and metaskills.

Sonia Straub (1990) has written an excellent manuscript on getting to know our critical figures, and having a relationship with them. Through relationship we both evolve and our relationship with them changes. Critics can have useful information. Sometimes it's their essential energy that we need to embody and make it our own.

Amy Mindell (2005, p. 203-205) discusses how to find the deeper message behind our critics. She suggests shapeshifting into the critical figure to express its full message and energy. Then unfolding its energy back to its essence before it became a critic. Through embodying the essence of our critic, before it becomes critical, we can make use of that new viewpoint to approach our work. Returning to an essence level is necessary when our critical figures are too strong and overpowering. In doing so we are able to go beyond the conflict around an edge with its critical figures.

Lastly I want to mention the work of Lane Arye (1991). Arye is a musician who has explored the unintentional sounds that occur when making music. His focus is on the auditory channel. Unintentional sounds are doorways into unexpressed parts of ourselves, or our secondary process. Arye shows how the way we play music or sing, is also mirrored in our night-time dreams and body symptoms. Arye says, "surprisingly, by exaggerating mistakes it is possible to learn new techniques which make playing and singing easier and more precise" (1991, p. ii). I have given examples of how I use this amplification method in a visual channel in chapter 5.

VIEWS FROM MY ALLY - ARRANGEMENT OF PAINTINGS







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You can contact me there. Some of these paintings can be viewed in higher resolution in the 'Views from my Ally' portfolio. A self-published, good quality, printed book of just the paintings and poems will also be available on line. There is also a link to a Youtube video presentation.