

The Patterning

Presentation within Embodied Imagination Training Course

When I began this project I was interested in the interrelationship between Embodied Imagination (EI), Creativity and Sense of Place: - a dialogue of synchronicity.

As I begin this project I pick up a book I haven't read for a while: Winona's Web (pg 67). The main protagonist Meggie is an analyst. Winona, an elderly Lakota Sioux medicine woman, announces she intends to die in two months, and comes to therapy at her daughter's insistence. The analysis switches as Winona with humour and spirit teaches Meggie to live rather than survive.

I opened it to this page.

There is danger in rushing into knowledge. There is danger in finding the answer before the question.

There is danger in giving oneself further to faith and allegiance, rather than build on experience.

This is how I am approaching this exploration and begin by exploring these themes.

Creativity

Creativity weaves magic– the unseen, unlimited, innate capacity we all possess. We are all creators. This powerful ethereal ability, the springwell – able to be tapped into and yet at times the door mysteriously sealed.

Interestingly enough, as I began to plant the seeds of my presentation, my creativity went on a holiday. More than a holiday, it was barren land. This has happened to me before. I knew enough this time to let it rest not to fall into the void of despair and when it returned I felt a shift.

Creativity, Spirit of Place and EI share common bones: following the process, an engagement, rather than outcome, presence and they open portals to other states of consciousness. In creativity, EI and Place often the most powerful thing I can do is to just get out of my own way, surrender, be.

I begin to express in a medium or facilitate a dream and then follow the thread, sitting in the unknowing, being open to the exchange. Open to hollow bone, allowing the image to come through – not taking ownership. I love the Inuit who will say when completing a carving

'Ah I did not know that was in there'.

Which differs from Michelangelo who moves towards a finished product.

"The sculpture is already complete within the marble block, before I start my work. It is already there, I just have to chisel away the superfluous material."

Sense of Place/Spirit of Place

*Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.*

~ Mary Oliver

A reciprocal relationship I sink into Dadirri: deep listening, this sensing both physical and metaphysical. As I surrender to my senses, my body, my presence then I'm in a state conducive to receive the Spirit of Place. I'm in an open receptive place in myself so there's a receptivity for Spirit. I enter a sacred site and the Spirit of Place immerses me, transporting me into the Dreamtime.

There is a mystery to Spirit of Place – who it welcomes, when it shares its teachings.

In the beginning, on a vast tract of continental crust in the southern hemisphere of planet Earth, the Dreaming brought forth the landscape, rendering it alive and full of meaning. It animates the landscape still, its power stirred constantly by human song, journey and ceremony. Past and present coalesce in these ritual bursts of energy. Creatures become mountains which become spirits that course again through the sentient lands and waters. People visit Country, listen to it, and cry for it; they sing it into being, they pay attention to it. They crave its beneficence and that of their ancestors. Their very souls are conceived by Country; life's first quickening is felt in particular places and they become anchored forever to that beloved earth.

Tom Griffiths

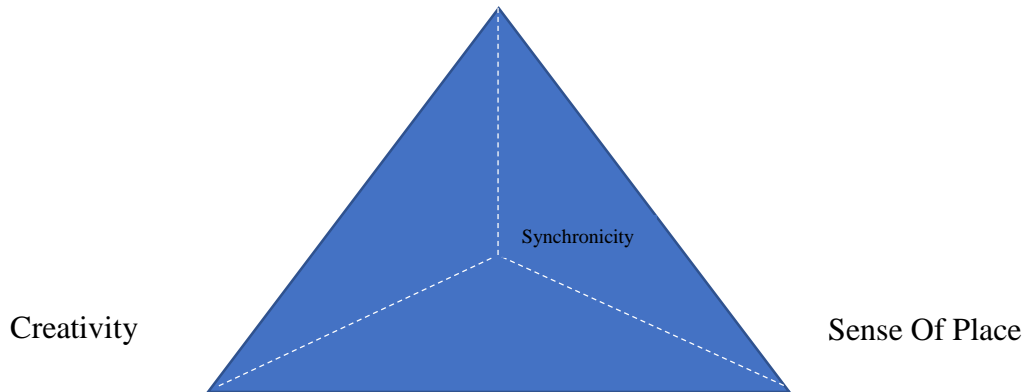
I continue to live within these mysteries 'How to be in presence of place? How to touch the earth and let her know and touch me - this reciprocal relationship'.

And open to the question how do I take this into EI? – sensing the places the dream opens – entering this sacred ground without imposition.

Embodied Imagination

A key tenet of EI is to be in the present moment, the not knowing, a phenomenological approach, following the process. This was the starting place for this project. To release habitual conscious ideas and move into relationship with the themes and the materials. An immersive exploration and the intent for the presentation was for participants to also have an immersive experience.

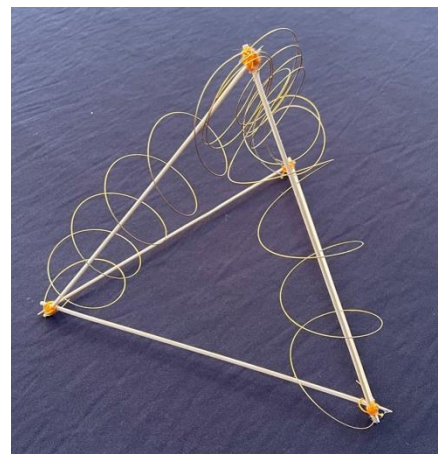
I begin by dropping into a hypnagogic state and playing with a model on paper.



And then took this into a simple 3D model to activate the exploration. There is a saying 'When you plan a trip you are in charge of the journey – once you begin, the journey has you'.

So the journey begins:

The structure is made of thin bamboo skewers and there is a delicacy of bringing these together.



As a collector of all things 'useful !!!' I had a coil of gold wire –a slinky. My intent was to wrap the entire wire around the 3 upright sticks. The material had other ideas and yet I did not give in easily. Have you ever tried to undo a slinky once tangled? I spent hours and hours untangling, trying to weave it again and again through the three uprights without cutting it and then more untangling.

'And one of the things that I think is most important for me, from what we have talked about and what Alchemy is all about, is that the material has its own desires. It is not just our desires, but the material has its own desires'. Pt 7 Embodying James Hillman Alchemical Psychology: Jung Platform

This notion has been part of my experience of the creative process. It becomes a dialogue The process began to work me and it seemed there were different pathways I could travel

The two most prominent: to continue to impose my determination onto the materials – frustration as I untangled or to release all to the process. I continued untangling, mirroring the decrusting in EI, moving from habitual consciousness into a deeper state and relationship with the themes and the material. With this insight I cut the slinky and approached each strand separately.

I slowed right down and began to listen, allowing the heat of frustration to be forged. One piece went on gracefully, a perfect spiral and attached easily to the structure. The next piece no matter how long I took I couldn't untangle and as I sank into the rhythm the insight emerged, this was part of this model and so I opened to that dialogue and placed it in its tangled form onto the structure. The third piece, no matter what I did I couldn't attach it so left it free.

This spoke of a number of things – attachment, entanglement - how important it is for me not to get be possessed by the method as an EI facilitator.

Robbie speaks of this in Part Nine of Embodying James Hillman Alchemical (Jung Platform webinar series) Psychology. My intention, which comes from my technique and my theory, can be obstructing another part of the dream that wants to have attention at that moment because I'm so interested in my method.

And I want to do that because my method tells me that, that I don't hear that in another place, some other character wants something else. And so I think that your method can become self-defeating if we're not in contact with the material.

So how do I keep a clear lens when I'm working and if I suddenly think I need to transit as this is the method? When the dream is calling for something else, I must follow that and not be entangled by the process or by the method or my rationale or that I have to do it in a certain way.

Synchronicity became a way of being early in my life and amplifies the more I engage in the work and yet always it is residing in the mystery, in the surprise. I often feel nothing will surprise me and then a synchronicity stops me in my tracks. I love the small things, the small synchronicities.

The following story weaves into these themes:

Once Upon a time there was a master craftsman with a fine job, a loving wife and four beautiful daughters. In short, everything which should make a man happy. But the man was restless and discontent. His wife asked him, "What is the matter?" "I want to find truth," he confessed. "Go then", she said. But being a very smart woman, she added, "leave everything in my name".

Off he went in search of truth, up mountains, down into valleys, along the coastlines, deep into mysterious forests. He searched for days and weeks and months until he was about to give up.

Then one cold day on top of a mountain peak he discovered a cave in which dwelled a wise and old woman. Her skin was so old it was the colour of leather. Her hair was whitened and reached her waist her hands were gnarled with arthritis, and whose mouth sported a single tooth. But when she beckoned to him, she spoke in a tone so pure and lyrical, he knew at last he had discovered truth. He stayed with her for a whole year and day, learning everything she could teach him in that time.

Then the time came when he knew he had to return to the outside world and his loving family. At the cave's entrance he turned to say farewell, truth he said, you have been so kind to me this past year, is there anything I can do for you? She thought for a moment, then raised an ancient finger. Yes, she replied. When you speak to them out there, tell them that I am young and beautiful. Winona's Web Pg 43

The story holds the sense of place – the wisdom of the cave and wisdom of the woman - this was the place where truth could reside whilst holding the paradox of her telling the world she was young and beautiful ,which still lived in her being.

The man determinedly seeks truth however only when he is about to give up, in this place of surrender, the mist clears and he finds the place.

The resonance between her and EI: I can think I 'know' what the dream means, what a transit represents – habitual consciousness rationale or interpretation, however to really enter into 'other' reveals a perspective I often could never imagine.

Creative Process

As a tactile creatrix I work with silk and felt which mirrors alchemical process. Hillman in Alchemical Psychology Pg. 10, uses this in his examples of alchemical language.

Enter alchemy – thing words, image-word, craft words. The crafting source of alchemy is such a technology. Each is a handiwork physically grappling with sensate material. Cloth and fibre dyeing, dipping, colouring, drying.

Felting adds to this language as it is the result of friction, moisture, and heat applied to wool. Merino wool is layered in thin strands placed in alternate directions onto dyed silk. Water heated to the right temperature and soap for ph balance is gently applied to the wool saturating it and the silk. Gentle massage encourages the barbs of the wool to open and penetrate through the silk. More vigorous rubbing allows the wool to interlock. Hot water can accelerate felting, but extreme heat can cause the fibres to shrink too much.

As I practice the composite I bring it to the creative surrendering to the process – not focussed on product or outcome, allowing the composite and the materials to weave their magic.

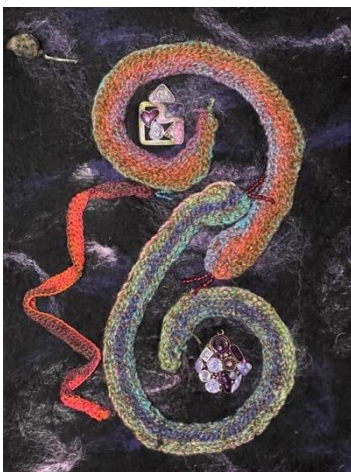
The felting mirrors the EI process, and the composite embodies deeper into my being. It brings me to another place of aliveness, offering insights and different perspectives. The textile then becomes a meditation piece, a yantra to sit with, calling me back again and again to the composite and emergent phenomena.

Creating the Composites

On a rocky platform similar to one I visit at Pebbly Beach in my Rav 4 , a policeman calls me over.

The transits highlight a triangular pattern (palm fronds in encaustic wax) between authority (seashell), maintaining steadiness (snake backbone) and softening heart (Grass tree blackened bark).

This piece woven near a beach and in daily walks connecting to the work the perfect shell, palm fronds gift themselves, This alchemical symbol (the triangle) regularly features in different permutations when working the composite and emergent phenomena.



In the dream I am on my childhood veranda a balmy night, and transit into the puppy and a snake coiled in a Celtic knot with another baby snake who is free and wild.

The transits reconnect me to memories of place – the bush at the end of our street, seeing my first snake and the fear and excitement that seeded in me a life of adventure. My best friend Blackie the dog accompanying me.



This dream is one image only – a divination card with a man standing in a stone archway gazing into the mist. I ask Robbie ‘ is one image appropriate for an EI process?’. His response is one of delight and enthusiasm knowing the potential of a single image.

The mist has long been a teacher as it is often shrouding the mountain across the valley from my home. The teachings of the land enter my dreams. I have been guardian of this land for 30 years. I have opened my soul to the soul of this land. Transiting into the mist has deepened my relationship.

Symptom work - a motor bike accident 30 years ago when I broke my leg and had cuts to the bone is playing up causing pain in my knee.

I am transited into a tunnel as the only way the facilitator can transit me into a presence, as it is so very far away. Meeting this presence deep within the cave – evokes both terror and gratitude. This oval, yoni, mandorla shape, and colour is something I have expressed in many forms for years in art, with no rational why I keep returning to this symbol.

El work gave me an embodied experience of the spirit of that shape, and spirit of that place.



The patterning

As I worked this project the idea of synchronicity opened into a more complex way of viewing the phenomena. The weaving of the patterning is often only comprehensible when a tapestry completes and knowing that this will keep unfolding: a labyrinth teaching.

There have been a multitude of occasions over the past 3 ½ years of engaging with a dream with a partner or in a brief and in-depth where I have experienced a synchronistic event so will share a couple.

In one of my first sessions I dream of a building like Hogwarts in Harry Potter. In an outside maze there are five massive eagles. One week later I'm travelling 500km to teach in the Northern Rivers. I hadn't planned to stop on the way, however booked into an Airbnb on impulse. The next morning I went for a walk down to the beach and I walked past a driveway there were the two exact eagle sculptures.

Each year my dream group goes away for a week. The night before leaving I have a dream with hydrangeas and blue irises. The next morning as I am walking along a well-trodden headland for the first time I see blue irises sprinkled throughout the grass.

Upon my return there was a hydrangea in a vase. I queried and a fellow dreamer replied
'Yeah, there was one in my garden and I wanted to bring it'

What is this patterning? Did this land dream me? Did I dream the land? Did it call me before I came? Did it influence me coming here? So this work opens me often to more questions than answers which I love. It is in the questioning- the questing, I stay alive I feel my aliveness.

As I am exploring synchronicity, I had not known that the theme for the next Intensive was around 'Spirit of Place'.

We were initially booked into a city retreat and at the last minute it was cancelled and a new place was located on Darkinjung country, a stone's throw from the beach and magnificent bush and water surrounding us.

Hermes laughing - if you're doing Spirit of Place this is where you are called? Did this place need this embodied dreaming work as much as we needed to be here?

I worked a dream with my partner. In one section I transited into a dress and it became part of the composite.

The out-of-place white lace dress brings contrast, experienced in the material above that fits snugly but doesn't breathe, and below, where it is freer, with more movement and swish.

There is a white tunnel in the dream which we explored but I did not transit into it.

The next night I went to see Bangarra. There was only one stage prop which was hidden by veils until it was lowered from the ceiling. It was identical to the tunnel I had dreamt and described the day before. I was catapulted into a heightened state of presence.



Ref: The Canberra Times July 20 2023

The next session with my partner I had not had a dream so decided to work with the memory and the synchronicity of the tunnel in Bangarra.

This interconnected many dreams and experiences I have had in EI, amplified by the construction of the 3D model of the gold spiralling around each axis and began to reveal other the patterning throughout my life and dream explorations. I briefly experienced a flash of a golden spiral whilst the composite was chanted at the residential. Robbie mentioned this was a scintilla. This was magnified when transiting into the tunnel in the memory of being at Bangarra. I experienced the internal energetics which became the same spiralling as I had experienced in the symptom work.

The presence I met in the cave was eons away and the tunnel the only way to reach it. I have only once before as a teenager travelled that far and it was not a good experience.

In conclusion

How has EI affected me?

Very subtle shifts, more resilience, softer heart and more grateful to be in this body at this incredible time on the planet. Entering different perspectives has enabled me to be more receptive to states of affairs in personal and world issues. To embody different states at one time in the composite and what emerges from this has enhanced my personal and professional life.

Thankyou:

- Robbie for your kind and generous sharing and depth of knowledge after all your years immersion in dreams.
- Jennifer and Michelle for your exquisite supervision and guidance.
- Group cohort what a journey together! I couldn't have asked for a better group.
- Past graduates your experience, questions and friendship enhanced the training.

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