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*Thesis:*

*Merging Practices: Process-Oriented Thinking and  
Practice as Applied to Art Therapy*

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*Merging Practices: Process-Oriented Thinking and Practice as Applied  
to Art Therapy*

by  
Mary O'Neill

**Abstract**

This study explores the potential of Process Oriented Psychology, or Processwork, as developed by Dr Arnold Mindell and colleagues, as a form of psychotherapy applicable to the practice of art therapy. It encourages readers to test the ideas presented by trying them out in practice. Links are made between existing approaches used in art therapy practice and the practice of Processwork; a single session case study is included, where the author combines both approaches.

As part of the study, the author's experience of her own art-making as dreamlike, and as understood from the perspective of Processwork, is explored.

The concept of *rank*, as understood in Processwork, is introduced and ethical issues in relation to art therapy are discussed.

**Key words:** Processwork/Process Work, Process Oriented Psychology, art therapy, Mindell; 'dreaming/dreamtime/dreamland', 'the edge', 'flirts', 'second attention', 'rank', all as understood in Process Oriented Psychology.

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Any remaining errors are my own.



# ***Merging Practices: Process-Oriented Thinking and Practice as applied to Art Therapy***

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# Introduction: Living the Dream

*'You will find the Way and the Way will follow you'*

Pooh Bear in *The Tao of Pooh* by Benjamin Hoff, p. 158.

*'Follow the moment'*

Arnold Mindell, *Dance of the Ancient One*, p.61.

On my first day on the Master of Arts in Art Therapy course, on first meeting my fellow students as a group, one of our tummies started to rumble, causing evident embarrassment for the person concerned (sheepish smile, pinkening face, slight squirming) and giggles among the group. I immediately thought, "This is a *hot spot*, a group *edge*, and needs facilitating to explore what our common *secondary process* is, to get to know each other as a group and begin to bond". That reflects my experience of what happens when you explore a group *edge*, and through it your common vulnerabilities - and through that find grounds for mutual support and a new strength that then becomes the group's *primary process*, i.e. the group's identity. But then I realised that I was thinking in a language that wasn't shared, that was outside the experience of everyone else there (*Processwork* terms appear in *italics*; their meaning can be found in Chapter Two).

I very quickly realised that what I had in mind was not part of the remit of the course I had embarked on. I had to consciously "park" it in order to be open to other ways of thinking.

I was glad to see some of Mindell's books in the reference library in the Art Therapy department, there because of staff member Julie Aldridge's interest in his work. At the summer workshop which she facilitated in 2010, she had encouraged me to bring a process-oriented approach to how I processed my own artwork. Latterly, as my thesis supervisor, she has encouraged me in this further, and now focussed, exploration into whether Processwork is applicable to art therapy, which became my research question. A Process-oriented approach has become a habit of mind with me, so it is always there in how I think of my own process via artwork – or artwork as part of my own process, as I hope will become evident.

It strikes me that Processwork may be a useful paradigm for art therapists to know about, as it seems to me to fit very well with art therapy, while also providing challenges (See Chapter Six). I think of this thesis as a "Processwork Primer" for art therapists: I hope it will be found both useful and interesting. For a more thorough-going "Processwork Primer", see *A Path Made by Walking* (Diamond and Spark Jones, 2004).

It was twenty years ago this summer (1994-2014) that I came across Arnold Mindell's first book *Dreambody* (1982) in a bookshop in Waterford, while visiting my brother who lives there. I am delighted to now note that in *Dreambody*, Mindell makes extensive use of art-based research, and does so in many of his subsequent writings.

At that time I was a shiatsu practitioner; shiatsu, meaning "thumb-pressure" in Japanese, is sometimes called 'acupuncture without needles', as it uses the same points and meridians as acupuncture. People who came to me for shiatsu often turned out to have emotional as well as physical problems. That would come as no

surprise to Mindell – or indeed Jung, of whose work Processwork is a development (Mindell 2013:59-63), a fact that may make Processwork of particular interest to art therapists, who tend to favour a Jungian approach.

Back then, I had been looking for a way to accompany my clients further on their journey, through helping them psychologically. When I found Processwork, I thought I had found the answer. But I never quite managed to marry the two. Looking back now, I see that my clients were *channel-switching*. Sometimes I was able to go with this and other times not, but in either case, I lacked awareness of what I was doing.

This thesis therefore represents my second, more successful, attempt to apply Processwork to another therapeutic art, made easier by the fact that art therapy already avails of a variety of psychotherapeutic approaches to help meet clients' needs.

Going back to 1994, when, having discovered Mindell, I then found a group of people in Dublin who were meeting together to study Mindell's work. Such was their interest and enthusiasm that a professional training was about to commence in Ireland. I was part of that first group of students, starting in January 1995, when I also discovered I was pregnant. I had to drop out in September 1995, as that baby was quite severely disabled. She died a year later, having had a huge and wonderful impact on my life, as she continues to have, as may be seen in this thesis. Not long after her death, I joined the second group of students that had started the following year.

In 1999 I completed the Certificate course, a precursor to the professional training in Process Oriented Psychology, which I then entered. In 2001 I started seeing clients under supervision. However, even though the training throughout was through

practice as well as theory, I was dissatisfied with my efforts to put it into practice and, for that and other practical reasons, in June 2002, I decided to quit.

A crucial reason was that I had not had “the dream”. One of the requirements of being accepted onto the professional training programme was that one had a dream indicating that one was to pursue this path. I had been allowed to start the professional training, but there was no sign of the dream.

Fast-forward to summer 2010. No longer a shiatsu practitioner but a teacher in adult education, I found myself looking for something else, not quite knowing what. As part of my exploration, I attended the Art Therapy Summer School at Crawford College of Art & Design, Cork, in July of that year. I thoroughly enjoyed the workshop I took, which was facilitated by Julie Aldridge; but, while inspired by her ability to be present to those participating, I didn't feel that art therapy was what I was looking for. Just two weeks later, at the end of ‘The Hero's Journey’ (a workshop facilitated over several days by the Fool's Dance Gestalt Company - Paul Rebillot School in Ireland), while in a conscious but altered – perhaps heightened – state, as a result of a guided breathwork experience, I had a ‘vision’ in my mind's eye of a childlike picture in wax crayons, and immediately thought: “I do want to be an art therapist”.



I tried to reproduce the drawing immediately afterwards in oil pastels, but felt I hadn't succeeded. Above is a second attempt (made towards the end of 2011, after commencing the Master of Arts in Art Therapy training in Cork); it seems truer, at least to my memory. "Light" had been a theme of my Hero's Journey experience, and when the picture appeared in my mind's eye, it was clear to me that the yellow represented light. I had no idea what the pink and blue at the bottom might represent, but I hope that by the time you finish this thesis, you may have an inkling. In art therapy, we are always on the lookout for recurrent shapes, colours, themes, etc., that may carry a message for the artist, which may take time to unfold.

Had I not studied Processwork, I might not have developed my *second attention*, which is what led me to take that vision seriously; and it is most unlikely that I would have recognised it as "the dream" I had been waiting for, to indicate the path I was to take.

In summer 2001, I had taken a notion that I wanted to become a teacher – a career path I had deliberately avoided to date. I noticed a feeling of excitement in my belly when I thought about it – a feeling I might not have registered, never mind taken seriously, had I not studied Processwork. Within a couple of months I had become a part-time teacher. A few months later I forsook my shiatsu practice, which I had continued part-time also. Teaching led me to work with immigrants and with adults with learning disabilities, two groups of people I wished to work with, but which my shiatsu practice had not brought me in contact with. Now I feel that everything that I have learned and done has been leading up to and contributing to my becoming an art therapist.

Throughout, Processwork has continued to inform my life and my thinking. But I mostly kept this to myself till coming towards the end of the Masters in Art Therapy training.

In a workshop in college with Ed Kuczaj, early in our final semester, he asked us to express in artwork where we felt ourselves to be, at this stage, with the thesis. By then, I had settled on *Merging Practices: Process-Oriented Thinking and Practice as applied to Art Therapy* as my topic, and had compiled a Literature Review. I immediately pictured a phoenix rising from the ashes, and knew that I wanted to make it in coloured tissue paper on a black background. The different colours of the feathers in the wings represent the different *channels* attended to in Processwork. The image is pretty much as I imagined it, but includes a couple of surprises:



The crown/crest and feet were added afterwards, and in trying to ensure the feet avoided the purple central flame, I notice that it looks like it has the potential to become a sexual act, perhaps indicating fertility/creative fulfilment? Jan Dworkin,

Processworker and artist (2003), is interesting on the timing and placement of elements in the image.

At first I was concerned that in flying to the left, it was flying into the past rather than the future, but as my art therapist (Alma McQuade), pointed out to me in my next personal therapy session, I am returning to Processwork, bringing art therapy to bear on it and it to bear on art therapy. This has proved a joyous experience and a creative and fulfilling endeavour.

### *References*

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# Literature Review

## Introduction

The aim of this thesis being to inform myself and others as to how the thinking behind Process-Oriented Psychology, as developed by Arnold Mindell and colleagues, may be usefully applied in art therapy, I set out to discover what evidence might already exist in the literature of these two approaches or paradigms being used in tandem.

Throughout this literature review the terms Process Oriented Psychology, Process Oriented Psychotherapy and Process Work/Processwork are to be found almost interchangeably (if with slightly different emphases), as all these terms are used by various members of the Processwork community worldwide. However, as far as possible I have opted for 'Processwork' as this is how Mindell himself refers to it in his latest book, published in July 2013.

## The Review

### **Searches linking Processwork and Art Therapy**

Using Boolean logic, in September 2013, I first entered a search on Google for 'Art + Mindell's Process Oriented Psychology/Psychotherapy', and got a lot of references to *art as therapy* but only one that seemed relevant: a Processwork dissertation by Kasha Kavanaugh (2007) containing a chapter titled Art Therapy.

A search on 1 January 2014 sourced *An Excerpt from "Process Oriented Psychology: Finding the Effortless Path of Heart"* by Oceana Larsen (undated), which contains a reference to "expressive arts therapies". Also Trawinski, C. (2011):

*Who or What Creates: A Personal Reflection on Painting* is of interest in that Trawinski brings a Process-oriented awareness to her painting and to her understanding of her work, which is not unlike how such work might be approached in art therapy.

On Google Scholar, even less showed up, and nothing that had not already appeared in the initial Google search. I also tried “Art Therapy” + “Mindell’s Process-Oriented Psychotherapy” with equally negligible results.

I subsequently tried the same and similar searches using other search engines, namely Science Direct, JStor and Ebsco-Host (15 January 2014). Using the combination: ‘Mindell’s Process Work/Psychotherapy AND Art Therapy’ produced no results.

### **Peer Reviews?**

On Science Direct, I entered Mindell’s Process Work on its own and got one result: Max Schupbach: Chapter 17 – Process Work in *Handbook of Complementary and Alternative Therapies in Mental Health* (2002: 355-373). Entering ‘Art Therapy’ on its own resulted in 108,665 articles. JStor brought no results. Nor did Ebsco-Host.

Despite my investigations, I found no peer reviews. This is significant in that it appears to indicate a lack of recognition of Mindell’s work in academic circles.

I am puzzled that this is the case, despite the many books and papers written by Mindell and colleagues over the last thirty plus years, and the reach of Processwork via seminars and workshops worldwide, as well as training in a number of countries - twenty-two according to the inside cover of *Dreaming While Awake* (2000a). As Mindell stated recently (2013:11), he has ‘been involved with policy makers in

various governments, with top scientists, and with large organizations from many different nations', as Processwork has evolved from individual work, to group work, to large group conflict work. So, on one level, Processwork has become widely known for its ability to help in difficult situations, while yet remaining off many people's radar. Perhaps this is because, by its nature, Processwork is constantly evolving, and has not become "fixed"; yet its basic principles are clear and consistent.

### **Limits of Recognition**

Likewise, Process Oriented Psychology/Processwork is rarely to be found in any list of known and recognised psychotherapeutic approaches. Inclusion, as in Shannon (2002) – see Schupbach citation above – is the exception rather than the rule. For example, in 2001, Rubin wrote a book entitled *Approaches to Art Therapy: Theory and Technique* in which, by her own account (2005:119), 'art therapists who have studied different orientations to psychotherapy describe how they have applied the thinking therein to their work. These orientations include psychodynamic ones (Freudian and Jungian) and humanistic ones (person-centred, phenomenological, Gestalt, and spiritual or transpersonal), as well as those that are behavioural, cognitive, developmental, systemic and eclectic'. Processwork is not listed. A quick internet search of 'psychotherapeutic approaches' turned up only one website that mentioned Process-Oriented Psychology (GoodTherapy.org).

A Google search for 'Critique of Mindell's Process-Oriented Psychology', brought no results, but interestingly, in September 2013 the Wikipedia page on the subject of Process Oriented Psychology featured a notice in red to the effect that such a critique was needed. The Process Work Ireland webpage (2010) recommends the

Wikipedia page (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ProcessOrientedPsychology#History>) as follows: 'Wikipedia is an online encyclopaedia which gives good background information about the development of Process Work, and describes its central ideas. It is very useful for obtaining a speedy overview of Process Work philosophy and methods.'

### **Ethical concerns**

A subsequent search on 15 January 2014 revealed that the Wikipedia page <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Process-orientedpsychology> had been updated and, under the heading 'Controversy and Criticism', now featured a trenchant critique of aspects of both the theory and practice of Process Oriented Psychology. Given the lack of other sources, and that some of the statements made were of such ethical concern that I felt unable to pursue the subject of this thesis without addressing that concern, I investigated further and reached the conclusion that that the criticisms were based on insufficient information. On revisiting the site on 30 July 2014, I find that these issues have been addressed and that the site appears to be fully up to date, and to be updated regularly.

Ethics are obviously an important consideration. Art therapist Michele Wood (Pratt & Wood, 1998a:31-32) treats of 'the power differential' in therapeutic relationships. Process Work treats of the same subject, naming it *rank*. Issues of rank are pinpointed in the Ethical Principles and Standards to be found at <http://www.processwork.org/about-pwi/ethical-principles-and-standards-for-process-workers/>. Likewise IACAT (Irish Association of Creative Arts Therapists) in Section 2.2 of its Code of Ethics and Conduct requires members to 'respect the rights and

dignity of all individuals'. Rank and power, from the perspective of Processwork in relation to Art Therapy, are discussed more fully in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

### **Mentions of Art Therapy in Processwork literature**

A couple of references to art therapy were found in literature relating to POP, namely: Vikkelsoe, J., 1994, 'A Collage of Thoughts on Art and Process Work' in *The Journal of Process Oriented Psychology*, Winter 1994-1995; also Joseph Goodbread, in his *Dreambody Toolkit* (1997) mentions art therapists among a list of practitioners that use techniques which are similar to some of those used in Processwork.

According to its founder, Arnold Mindell, Processwork offers 'a single theoretical framework which integrates the immense variety of human psychology' (1985a:2).

### **Where Processwork and Art Therapy may meet**

As mentioned above, there is no shortage of books and papers written on Process Oriented Psychology, just as there is no difficulty finding books on art therapy. Consequently, I propose to indicate where I have found evidence of an overlap of thinking between the two approaches, as that is where my interest lies.

The first thing to look at here, of course, is the use of the word 'process'. Is the 'process' referred to in Processwork the same process, understood in the same way, as the process – the creative process - referred to in McNiff's *Trust the Process* (1998)? Or by other art therapists such as Allen(1995): 'The art process carries us free of conscious thinking and judging. This absorption in the process is what heals' (vii), Malchiodi (1998:63-78) and Moon (2002)? Mindell writes (1985b:11), 'Process work saves me from judgements. If I think in terms of process, I cannot think on

terms of good or bad, sick and healthy, past or future... I can think non-verbally ... and I don't get stuck with words'. So there may be some common ground there.

This is something to be addressed and teased out in this thesis.

Are there other areas of overlap of ideas between art therapy and Processwork? To explore this, I first note where I have found references to the visual arts in texts on Processwork. I then note common influences on both approaches and reference art therapists working in ways that remind me of Processwork.

Amy Mindell's *Dreaming Source of Creativity* (2005) has a number of exercises that may be of interest to art therapists, using artwork creatively and therapeutically.

Jan Dworkin in a lecture on Art and Dreaming in 2003 applies Processwork principles to art-making.

Lane Arye Ph.D., Process Worker (Process Work Diplomate - graduate)

[<http://www.processworklane.com/>] has written a book called *Unintentional Music: Releasing Your Deepest Creativity* (2001). Primarily a musician, he claims to use 'music as the starting point, but' to include 'all art forms and ways of expression' and adds, 'The unintentional aspects of the music we make ... contain more wisdom than we might think. The same is true of the unexpected splash of color on the canvas'.

This way of thinking is one that will be familiar to art therapists.

Helen Wells [<http://www.helenwells.co.uk/>] is an art therapist and Process Worker/Process Work Diplomate who uses both approaches, separately and together. A brief example of the latter is to be found at <http://suicidalwisdom.no-ip.org/pages/articles.asp>. (Wells 2010).

## Common Influences on Art Therapy and Processwork

I have found no references to Process-Oriented Psychology or Processwork in art therapy literature. However, I have found a number of references that reflect common influences, such as:

Rubin (2005) , who points to the birth of art therapy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the influence of the 'depth psychology' of Jung 'with its emphasis on the power of the unconscious and the language of the symbol'. Indeed, Schaverien (1999:81) writes: 'Some consider Jung to have been the first art therapist'. Processwork also originated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the works and thinking of Jung, as Mindell, himself a Jungian analyst, sought to further and expand the work of Jung by 'connecting body experience with symbols' (1998:13). Jung hinted at this connection when he posited that 'there is no illness that is not at the same time an unsuccessful attempt at a cure'; he suggested that the patient might be 'the unwitting victim of instinctual problems which he doesn't understand and which nobody in his environment has helped him solve' (Vol. 15:46). On examining his own experience of illness and that of others, Mindell (1985b:5-7) noticed that the body tends to *amplify* its own symptoms and that people do the same, e.g. scratching an itch. He also discovered that further amplification may or may not lead to a 'cure', as Jung suggests, but does lead to understanding, to meaning (ibid). The 'Self' in the title of Mindell's first book, *Dreambody, The Body's Role in Revealing the Self* (1982) is the Self as understood by Jung (CW 6, 9, 11).

Art therapist, Michele Wood (Pratt & Wood,1998b:8) favours a 'humanistic' approach to art therapy, focussed on 'how the person's actions and experiences in the present can guide and create their future'; this brings to mind the teleological approach to be

found in Processwork. Amy Mindell, in a chapter on the Roots of Process Work in her book *Metaskills* (1995:55), says of her husband, 'Arny originally trained as a Jungian analyst. One of Jung's main tenets was the concept of teleology; that is, that events are striving towards a meaningful purpose or goal' (1969: 406). In an interview with Jeffrey Mishlove (1992), Mindell says that Process Oriented Psychology works with 'what is consciously happening and what is happening that you don't want to perceive', the aim being 'to work with what is happening (in the present moment)'. Or, as Michael Edwards described similarly in an essay on Jungian Analytic Art Therapy (in Rubin 2001:102), '... working with [pictorial] images in a spontaneous way almost always seems to call up another side of the personality. The otherness has to be recognized as one's own, and it can be truly astonishing to discover hidden aspects of the personality confronting the conscious ego'. Mindell (1993:27) also says, 'The focus in processwork ... is not developing the ego further but rather on developing awareness of change'. The 'otherness' mentioned by Edwards and the 'hidden aspects of the personality' might be described in Processwork as *secondary process*, whereas the 'conscious ego' would be part of the *primary process* (See Chapter Two). The recognition of that otherness as one's own represents integration of the two.

According to Wood (1998b:7-8), 'the most commonly used model for understanding the therapeutic process at work in art therapy is the psychodynamic one', in which 'the tension and conflict between different aspects of the individual's personality are assumed to be repressed and held out of awareness (in the unconscious) when they become unbearable. However, the resulting contents of the unconscious need to find expression and may do so through physical symptoms, recurrent behaviour and relationship patterns, and dreams'. In Process Oriented psychology these are seen

as *secondary processes*, finding express through *channels* which it names as *visual, auditory, kinaesthetic* (movement), *proprioceptive* (feeling/sensation), *relationship and world*.

Of particular interest is how some art therapists already work with the *channels* mentioned above, while not naming them as such, rather understanding them as different types of artistic expression, and encouraging their clients in changing channel/mode of expression, as a means of amplification and integration. McNiff in *Art as Medicine* (1992:22) believes that 'separations among the arts are contratherapeutic', and continues, 'As I work with individuals, I am open to their poetic speech, stories, body movements, dramatic enactments, sounds, and other expressions as well as to the pictures they paint. I try to establish contact with as many aspects of the person's presence as possible'. This is equivalent to the Process Worker encouraging the individual to experience their *secondary process* (see Chapter Two, p.47) in as many *channels* as possible.

Lachman-Chapin writes in relation to C. Moon (2002:10), 'There are now expressive art therapies disciplines in all art fields: visual arts, music, drama, dance, poetry, and prose writing. Using them all as needed becomes part of her way of working, as it does now for many practitioners'. Moon herself writes (ibid:33) that there is 'no reason to limit myself to visual art as my only means of conceiving of my work. I may still be able to hear the rhythmic qualities in a client's way of telling a story, see the rocking/fidgeting movements of an elderly patient as a kind of dance enactment, or attend to group process as a drama unfolding'. Later she adds (p.49): 'Developing empathic observation skills involves learning to be present with, focused on, and receptive to what is right in our midst. It requires using all our senses – sight, smell,

touch, taste and hearing – as the tools of our trade, as would any artist. It also requires that we are attentive to what is within us, to the inner murmurings, the intuitive responses, the visceral reactions to that which we encounter'. Thus, Moon's *second attention* (see Chapter Two) and *channel* awareness can be seen to be highly developed and her way of working with these seems not so different from Processwork. The main difference appears to be that Processwork has developed an approach that is consistent theoretically, structurally and with a unifying vocabulary that links and finds the same dreaming in different aspects of a person's behaviour. Moon's 'process of creating "The Bitch Queen"' (ibid:57-8) to explore the "critical mother" in herself, led her to experience 'delight' in discovering that this figure had strengths and positive attributes which she was able to own along with the more negative ones. I was struck by how closely this resembled a Processwork approach, with a similar result of discovering the positive in what starts out seeming like a negative.

Balloqui (2005:134-5) writes of 'the therapist's obligation to be constantly aware of personal thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations, as well as visual, verbal and bodily clues from the patient, so that both the conscious and unconscious needs of the patient can be recognized and responded to appropriately within the time available'. Balloqui here refers to both her own experience and that of the patient in the moment. Process Oriented Psychology is one approach to meeting both this obligation and the patient/client's needs, and its literature is replete with ways of doing this. Useful introductory works are *A Path Made by Walking* (Diamond and Spark Jones 2004), *Working with the Dreaming Body* (Mindell 1985), *River's Way* (Mindell 1985), *Riding the Horse Backwards* (Mindell & Mindell 1992), *The*

*Dreambody Toolkit* (Goodbread 1997) and, of specific interest to art therapists, *The Dreaming Source of Creativity* (Mindell, Amy 2005).

Dalley (1987:4) cautions against undue emphasis on 'art work or any visual communication' warning that this 'can pre-empt the session'. She quotes an example from Judd (1986:146) who writes: 'the art therapist may respond with more interest and enthusiasm to say, a painting, than for example, to the child who sits quietly playing with his fingers or jumps on the couch or whatever – all equally part of what the child is "saying" or significantly not saying'. In Processwork terms, this might read: 'all equally part of his process'. Morgan (in Case & Dalley 2005:41) observes: 'Children often want to use the whole room and its contents for play' and adds, 'It is informative to observe if and when this happens and to wonder about the possible meaning'. This calls to mind Goodbread's statement in his book *The Dreambody Toolkit* (1997:30) that 'what happens is right and should be encouraged. It only looks wrong when we do not understand its context sufficiently', which he calls 'the fundamental law of process-oriented psychology'.

Janie Rhyne (1913-1995) is described as a 'pioneer of art therapy, best known for her own approach to art therapy – Gestalt art therapy' (Borowsky Junge & Wadeson 2006:159), who 'emphasised the kinaesthetic aspects in the perception of visual expression' (p.160). Mindell writes of Processwork (1985b:4) that '[k]nown therapies may appear in this work', among which Gestalt is mentioned on a number of occasions throughout Mindell's writings (1985a:31, for example). He acknowledges 'gestalt-oriented process work' as important to the development of Processwork (1985a:viii), qualifying this by writing that 'the Gestalt psychologists who made the term process famous in psychology, do not define the term. They differentiate it from

“content”, which is what people say’. He adds, ‘For me, process includes content’ (1985:b:10).

### **Shamanic Approaches**

I find it interesting that both McNiff (1992) and Mindell (1993, 2000a, 2000b, 2007, 2013) write of the importance of the shamanic in therapy. McNiff (p.19) writes: ‘Our contemporary fascination with shamanism is an expression of a hunger for experiences that engage and sanctify the total spectrum of life, and not just the human dimension’. Mindell writes: ‘Indigenous healers have taught me that the quality of life depends upon body sensations that are linked to dreams and the environment, to what I call the shaman’s body’. More recently (2013), writing of process oriented ecology, he says that it ‘integrates psychology with earth systems’. I imagine that if McNiff and Mindell were to meet, they could have an interesting conversation on the subject!

### **An Interest in Physics**

McNiff also opines (1998:46) that ‘Carl Jung’s belief in the purposeful process of human experience establishes close links between psychology and the theoretical advances of physics’, which are thoroughly explored by Mindell, a physicist before he was a Jungian analyst, in a number of his books (2000a, 2000b, 2013). McNiff writes: ‘The physicists are telling us that we create reality through our interactions with the world. This idea has great significance for creative arts therapy. If we create and recreate our worlds, then it follows that a therapy based on the practical application of this theory will have major scientific as well as artistic relevance’; Processwork may well be such a therapy, and indeed, Mindell writes of ‘process science’ (1985b).

## **Social Activism**

Another commonality may be the recognition of the need for social activism, which is integral to Processwork and has evolved along with it. On the back cover of *City Shadows* (Penguin Arkana edition, 1991), Mindell is quoted as urging a view that sees society as 'as much in need of change as the individual is of understanding'. Cathy Moon, in a chapter on 'Art Therapy and Social Responsibility' (2002), writes of the 'individual in relation to human community' (p. 281) and, on p. 305, urges 'commitment to social awareness and social action'.

## **Following the client**

Importantly, Processwork does not rely on the therapist's interpretation, but on how the process unfolds, revealing itself (Mindell: 1992). This chimes well with art therapy, where it is not the role of the art therapist, but of the artist, to interpret their work and what it means to them (See FAQs on Art Therapy on the IACAT website).

## **Conclusion**

The evidence quoted from the literature cited in this review suggests that there is some common ground and much of common interest in the therapeutic approaches of art therapy and Processwork. While both are strongly influenced by Jung, Processwork has drawn on and brought together a number of different philosophies and theories to form a new whole; whereas individual art therapists may draw on any number of psychotherapeutic approaches of their own choosing, often according to the individual needs of the client or the demands of the situation. I have not felt it necessary to go into this in relation to art therapy in this literature review, taking it as an already known quantity within art therapy. I have, however, felt it necessary to

include enough information to give the reader some understanding of Processwork, as one aim of this thesis is to inform art therapists of the potential of Processwork for use in individual art therapy.

Lastly, I would like to quote Cathy Moon again: 'When we speak publicly or publish our writings, we represent our own individual thoughts, experiences, and beliefs and we also serve as representatives of the art therapy profession' (2002:275). While not yet an art therapist, or indeed a Process Worker, I am very conscious that in selecting what to include in this literature review, I have brought to bear on it my own thoughts, experiences and beliefs, in the hope of doing honour and justice to both art therapy and Process-Oriented Psychology. I hope it also reflects my own excitement about this project, and that it will prove to be of interest to members and students of both professions.

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# Research Methodology

*'The power of creative expression in therapy will not be fully realized until researchers begin to acknowledge and investigate the profound kinship amongst all of the imagination's faculties and the way in which they augment and support one another.'*

Shaun McNiff: *Art-Based Research*, p.16.

I did not initially envisage this thesis becoming a reflection on my own journey to becoming an art therapist. It was planned to be a qualitative, phenomenological study, beginning with the case study, *It's a Tree* (May 2013), which I had hoped would lead to further case studies indicating how Processwork can be applied in art therapy. Instead, I found myself largely dependent on my own resources, i.e. on my own artwork and the processing thereof, to provide insight and evidence. This creates certain limitations, but has proved advantageous overall.

In order to thoroughly investigate the subject of this study, I have found it necessary to combine four different forms of research: phenomenological, heuristic, qualitative and art-based research. While I trust all four forms are distinguishable within the writing of the thesis, I think they will also be found to be inseparable. Below I delineate their distinct and distinctive qualities and their relevance to and within this thesis.

## **A Phenomenological Study**

‘Literally, phenomenology is the study of “phenomena”: appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience. Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view’ (*The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:2013).

This might almost be a definition of Process Oriented Psychology itself, except that the definition of phenomenology refers to conscious experience, which is close to what Processwork calls *primary process*. *Primary process* reflects our primary identity – how we identify ourselves. Thus it tends to be more known, more familiar, more acceptable to us, than things that are on the edge of our consciousness, or as yet unconscious – or that we do not wish to acknowledge. Those things are also phenomena, but are referred to in Process Work as *secondary processes*; they are indeed ‘appearances of things’ and ‘ways we experience things’, but their meaning is often less immediately accessible. We may even be loath to acknowledge them, but bringing them into consciousness and studying them can be informative and relieving.

Given the subject of my thesis, my ‘phenomenological’ study will of necessity include both primary and secondary phenomena as here defined.

## **A heuristic study**

This thesis is also a heuristic study, according to these definitions of *heuristic*:

‘Enabling a person to discover or learn something for themselves: a “hands-on” or *interactive heuristic approach to learning*’ ([www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com)); ‘a method

of teaching allowing students to learn by discovering things themselves and learning from their own experiences rather than by telling them things.’ (Definition of heuristic adjective from the [Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus](#) © Cambridge University Press). According to McNiff (1998:53), ‘The Greek word “heuriskein” means to discover and find. Today heurism connotes a method of learning through which knowledge is discovered through an enquiry based upon the examination of personal experience’. Moon (2002:58) quotes Moustakas (1995:24), describing heuristic study as the ‘process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis’. On setting out to write this thesis, I didn’t realise just how successful this approach would prove to be in helping me to integrate the theory and practice of Processwork as applied to art therapy.

### **A Qualitative Study**

A perception still exists that quantitative research is somehow more reliable than qualitative research, though the reverse is also arguable, according to Seale, who writes that prior to the 1940s ‘the set of practices that came to be incorporated under the “qualitative method” banner had been part and parcel of a general approach to scholarship and academic inquiry, in which quantitative-qualitative distinctions were relatively unimportant’. Citing Alasuutari (2004, Chapter 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Seale writes that ‘[t]his was before the American-led development of social survey methods under a scientific paradigm ... which came to dominate methodological thinking and practice in human sciences at a time when faith in progress through the application of science was a widespread social value’.

Arnold Mindell Ph.D., founder of Process Oriented Psychology, otherwise known as Processwork, qualified first as a physicist, before studying Jungian psychology. He identifies primarily as a scientist, speaking of 'process science' (1985) and linking psychology and physics (ibid:viii; 2000a; 2000b;2013). He says that '[s]ince Descartes, quantitative, "objective", thinking in physics has been accepted as the standard'. But, in Mindell's view, 'the most elementary substance of the physical world is dreamlike' (2000b:19).

Mindell quotes from a conversation between Wolfgang Pauli, Nobel Prize-winning physicist and C.G. Jung, where Pauli posits as 'the only acceptable point of view ..., the one that recognizes both sides of reality – the quantitative and the qualitative, the physical and the psychic – as compatible with each other and which can embrace them simultaneously'. I understand Pauli's use of 'psychic' to mean "relating to the psyche". According to Mindell, 'Today's scientific thinking splits these worlds apart. Physicists call everyday reality the "classical" reality and use terms such as space, time, matter, and observer.... Psychology calls the second world the realm of direct, personal experience, dreaming, deep feeling, psyche, and personal growth. This world consists of such subjective experiences as emotions, telepathy and so forth' (ibid:24).

It is this second world of subjective experience that is under investigation in this thesis. It is hoped to provide a quantity of qualitative evidence that is persuasive of the relevance of Processwork to both self-understanding and to the therapist's understanding of the client in art therapy.

## Art-Based Research

I have been especially happy to be able to follow my own process via *art-based research*, inspired by dipping into McNiff's book of that title (1998); on p.15 he puts it thus: 'Art-based research is simply defined by its use of the arts as objects of inquiry as well as modes of investigation'. This links it to heuristic inquiry. Mc Niff suggests (p. 54) that the focus on the therapeutic effects of art and the relationship with art media has a modifying effect on heuristic inquiry, making it less 'self-involved': 'In art, the self is a major participant but there is always the goal of making expressions that are able to speak for themselves'.

The following definition by Knowles and Cole (2008: 29), quoted by Andrews (2009), echoes my experience: 'Arts-based research can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies'. Without consciously thinking of it as research, I have, over some years, been making 'use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions ... as a primary way of understanding and examining [my own] experience', and also, through observation, that of others, although this is my first time to have documented it. As McNiff says (1998:36), 'There are no divisions between research and practice'.

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## Chapter One

# What is Processwork?

*'The foundation of Process Work springs from the ancient Taoist beliefs in the wisdom and continual unfolding of nature.'* Amy Mindell, 2005:x)

*'... process can be simply defined as the observation of signals.*

*Just follow process in terms of what you see, feel, hear, and dream.*

*Process! Follow events, follow what people do, follow nature, follow the river.'*

(Arnold Mindell, 2013: 7)

An enquiring classmate asked about the subject of my thesis, leading her to ask:  
What is Process Oriented Psychology?

Just as when asked, 'What is art therapy?' I took a deep breath before answering.  
What follows is largely what I said, edited for clarity:

Arny (Arnold) Mindell, who founded Process Oriented Psychology, is a Jungian analyst. He was interested in Jung's association of patients' dreams with their symptoms. Mindell believed he could see dream figures appearing – or trying to make themselves seen, felt, or heard – via physical symptoms – and he developed ways of amplifying those signals so that their message could reach the person suffering from them (Mindell 1982;1985a;1985b;1992;1998). This sometimes led to relief of those symptoms, as if they were no longer needed; other times it led to greater awareness of the message in the symptoms - and perhaps to the sufferer even welcoming them as a reminder of that.

Mindell originally referred to this as the body dreaming and to the work itself as Dreambodywork – a term he later replaced with Processwork or Process Oriented Psychology (Weidmann 2012).

As far as Mindell is concerned, we are always dreaming, the body is always dreaming, hence the term Dreambody. For instance, if you have a pain, you might ask yourself, or the therapist might ask you, “What is the pain like?” and seek a very detailed account: position, depth, temperature, kind of pain – sharp/dull/throbbing/extensive, etc. Is it like a hammering, a knife, a shock? Then you might be asked to imagine the ‘Painmaker’: Who is that character wielding the hammer or the knife, for instance? You may be asked to fill out that role so that you have figure like a dream figure to play with, battle with, dialogue with, etc. It may reflect a pattern of experiences in your life that you have felt the victim of, or it may appear as your mother/father/teacher or someone else, which might lead you to working on the relationship with that person – or that issue.

Rather than speak about transference and counter-transference, Processwork speaks of a shared *field*, a term borrowed by Mindell from physics (1998:52), which is like an atmosphere that pervades the space and that can be dreamlike. Individuals within that space may be *dreamed up* (Mindell 1985b:65) to feel and act in such a way that they are filling a role, like a dream figure. But we can self-reflect and become aware that this is what is happening. It is perhaps just a different – maybe more fluid – way of describing transference/counter-transference: either client or therapist, or anyone in the room if it’s a group session, may find themselves acting like say, the client’s father. This also happens all the time in everyday life, that people get *dreamed up* to act in certain ways, which at times they may consider to be ‘out of character’ and wonder why they acted that way. Knowledge of the concept

of *dreaming up* can be helpful in such situations. For a discussion of dreaming up in the context of transference, counter-transference and projection, see Mindell (1985a), pp.40-49. It is interesting to compare this with Schaverien on transference and countertransference (1999:13-29), especially in relation to Jung, alchemy and archetypes.

Throughout this thesis, I look at different ways in which attention and awareness can be brought to the dreaming that is going on all the time. As the old children's song goes, "*Life is but a dream*".

However, there is more to Process Work than contained in my description above, as may be imagined from the number of books referred to here, as well as the many more written by Mindell and colleagues over the years of its existence and continuing evolution.

Amy Mindell describes it thus in her introduction to *Riding the Horse Backwards* (1992:1):

**Process work, as process-oriented psychology is often called, extends the Jungian concept of the unconscious and the methods of Gestalt practice. It incorporates the feeling of shamanism and performing arts, and touches upon healing, meditation and awareness procedures. Process work might well be categorized as one of the new transpersonal psychologies since it attempts to bring together spiritual practices with Western psychological methods.**

On the next page, she adds, 'Process-oriented psychology is itself in process, undergoing a phase of rapid change and growth. It is therefore difficult to describe its next stage of development'. This is somewhat prescient, as can be seen from *Amy on the Evolution of Process Theory* (Fall 2002), which can be found on the website she shares with Arnold Mindell. There she writes, '[O]ver the past few years a significant expansion and deepening of process theory has arisen'. This continues to be the case, as Processwork continues to evolve.

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**Quick Reference**  
**for**  
**Terminology of Processwork**

The following chapter explains and explores terminology used in Processwork by relating one term to another rather than listing them alphabetically. Below is an alphabetical list for quick reference, including where certain terms are explained elsewhere in the thesis.

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# Linking Processwork and Art Therapy through the Terminology of Process Oriented Psychology

## Explanation and Exploration

*'It is certainly undesirable to invent new terms when none are needed; but it is also important to realise when existing terms are inadequate for a particular purpose'*

J. Schaverien in *The Revealing Image* (p.6)

In explaining Processwork terms, I have attempted to do so in a way that shows how one term relates to the next, and ultimately how all relate to one another to create a comprehensive and comprehensible approach. I have also attempted to include how – and in some cases why – some terms may differ in meaning from the same or similar terms as used in art therapy, in other forms of psychology, or in everyday language – such as the term 'process' itself \*. In addition, I have explored how some terms may be looked at in a particular way in the context of art therapy.

Having used the word “comprehensive” in the first paragraph, I should also point out that what follows is not an exhaustive list of Processwork terms, partly because of the limitations of this thesis, which confines itself to work with individuals; and partly

because Processwork is constantly in evolution, itself being a process, with new terms being added accordingly. I hope to provide sufficient vocabulary to introduce the work to those who have never come across it before, and thereby make the basic premises of Processwork understandable.

I should also explain the term Process Worker: a Process Worker is someone professionally qualified in Process Oriented Psychology, having completed the training required by IAPOP (International Association of Process Oriented Psychology) affiliated organizations (IAPOP:2010).

What does Mindell mean by 'process'? In 1985 (b:10) he wrote, 'I use the term process like a physicist, not like a psychologist. The psychologists, especially the Gestalt psychologists who have made the term process famous in psychology, do not define their term. They differentiate it from "content", which is what people say. For me, process includes content', and (p.11), 'I use the word process to refer to changes in perception, to the variation of signals experienced by an observer'.

Later, he wrote, 'My original name for what is now called process-oriented psychology was dreambodywork, emphasizing the connection between the world of dreams and the experiences of the body.' (1993:16). More recently, in an interview about the beginnings of Processwork, he said 'I realised everything Jung had said about the unconscious is a physical reality as well as what we – I - would call a psychological or a psychic reality. So Processwork in a way got born when I realised physical reality and psychological reality – both of these things are interesting, but the words are no good. I need a new term – process, process, process' (Weidmann, 2012).

Mindell also equates process with nature or the ancient Chinese idea of the Tao 'or the time: what's happening in a given moment' and that the Process Worker needs 'to be able to work with what is happening' and 'to use the total potential of the human being' (1992).

Of course, we come across the term "process" constantly in art therapy, contrasting process and product, while attending to both. "The creative process" is a common term throughout the arts and wherever creativity is spoken of. McNiff has written a whole book on the subject (1998b). So when Mindell speaks of process and McNiff (or indeed Allen or Malchiodi or others) speak of process, are they speaking of the same thing? McNiff even uses the term 'process-oriented creation' (1998b:13).

To take McNiff as an example, he writes (ibid:3), "Process" suggests a series of actions, changes and fluctuations. There is an incremental quality to process, and creative results are often achieved by making connections between previously unrelated areas'. He goes on, 'The process is a route; sometimes it is tangled and other times it opens to us with the directness, speed, and pleasure, of a water slide'. Other statements he makes include: 'We live within the process of creation just as much as it exists within us'; 'There is an understanding that the process must keep changing' (ibid:2); 'I have learned that I must let "the process" follow its course' (ibid:24).

These statements are not unlike many of Mindell's, who says, 'For me, process work is a natural science. A process-oriented psychologist studies and follows nature' (1985b:9). In these terms, McNiff, Moon (C.) and others are already working in a process-oriented way. Perhaps the difference lies in the specificity of how Mindell follows signals: his particular methodology - whereas others may have developed

their own. I am not suggesting in this thesis that Mindell's methods are necessarily superior, but I suggest that he provides a particularly useful, coherent way of - and language for - following process. According to Helen Wells, who is both a Process Worker and an art therapist, 'One of the differences between Processwork and Art Therapy is that in POP we make interventions that support the process to unfold. In Art Therapy it's more following and letting the process unfold. So I think POP has something to offer around edges and where the process gets stuck' (Personal communication via email, 17 July 2014).

The term 'edge' (see below, p.52), when used in the context of Processwork, is a particularly evocative and illustrative term, linked to its everyday meaning. It seems to me that the choice of terms – whether this has arisen consciously or unconsciously or a bit of both – is based on the experience of Process-Oriented Psychology when put into practice as Processwork. In fact, as I understand it, there is a constant and ongoing dialogue between the theory and the practice, with the empirical as the touchstone.

*Primary process* refers to how a person identifies themselves and what they identify with, in the present tense, e.g. "I am a woman, a partner, a mother, a teacher, a student ...". However, according to Amy Mindell (2005:125), 'Our primary process is not totally conscious. It happens to us and becomes an automatic long-term pattern'. It is our everyday or ordinary identity: 'our common, habitual identity and focus' (Mindell 1989: 150).

Being legally married, I am a wife – I am tempted to say "technically" a wife, as that role doesn't sit easily with me, so I don't fully identify with it. I am a bit uncomfortable with the idea of myself as "wife", which makes it somewhat *secondary* for me.

*Secondary process* refers to every aspect of me that I don't, don't yet, or no longer identify with. It is often unfinished business, or at least incomplete: an aspect of ourselves that we don't know very well, perhaps don't like very much, but which can sometimes be more easily perceived by others - as can very positive aspects of ourselves that we don't recognise, because maybe we don't believe that we can really be that great! It can be quite unconscious, unknown to either ourselves or others, but can make itself known via *secondary signals*.

Mindell recently wrote of *primary and secondary processes* (2013:18): 'Things are closer to awareness and further from awareness. So we try to say, awareness is there, is unified, instead of conscious and unconscious, which could be a little more split'. Really each is part of our wholeness, part of a continuum, rather than separate, though the *edge* creates the illusion of separateness (see below): once the secondary is brought into awareness, we begin to identify with and it becomes part of our primary process.

[This is quite different - and sounds almost contrary - to Freud's use of the terms *primary and secondary process*. See Case & Dalley 2006:114; Goodbread1997: 38.]

Let's look at how you might distinguish between *primary signals* and *secondary signals*.

*Primary signals* are intentional signals, e.g. saying what I mean, in the tone and with the gestures/movement/stillness I intend; and if all goes according to plan, the person/s on the receiving end will perceive me as acting *congruently*, which means that everything goes together and makes sense together.

However, if my tone, facial expression or gestures are at odds with my words and inconsistent with my apparent intention, then they are *incongruent*. For instance, someone is giving a talk but, unbeknownst to himself, he is constantly tapping a pen on the desk in front of him as he does so. (I was in the position of giving this person feedback on his talk, and he told me, “I didn’t even know I was doing that”.)

The tapping is a *secondary signal*. When primary and secondary signals happen together, they are known as *double signals*: we are getting two conflicting or inconsistent (incongruent) signals, one of which is unintentional (Mindell 1985b:60-65; 1998:15-16).

*Secondary signals* are often experienced as something *happening to us* unintentionally, something over which we have little or no control, or even no knowledge, as in the case of the tapping mentioned above.

In addition, Mindell uses the terms “first attention” and “second attention” which he borrowed from ‘Carlos Castaneda’s don Juan figure’ (1993:5). When using *first attention*, we are bringing our attention, and thereby our awareness, to our *primary process*; likewise we use our *second attention* to bring awareness to our *secondary process* (ibid: 23-26). He comments: ‘In processwork, “following the process” depends on the client’s state of awareness as much as it does on the therapist’s awareness. Both need to develop their second attention’ (ibid:24).

Primary and secondary processes will usually occur in different *channels*, and each of us will have particular channels that we identify with, i.e. generally express ourselves through, and others that we generally don’t identify with, which is where our secondary process will most likely make itself known.

So what is a channel?

## **Channels**

'The term comes from communications theory, where a channel is a discrete carrier of information' (Goodbread:1997:44). Mindell very simply calls them 'the signals in which [processes] appear to us' (1985a:14). The six listed below are those first identified by Mindell (ibid:14-21). The channels are not arbitrary, but can be culturally-determined, as Mindell explains (ibid). Goodbread's list (1997:44) is slightly different.

Four sensory/body channels:

*The Visual Channel* has to do with what we see, be that in our environment or in our imagination. It is the one of most obvious interest to art therapists. Of it Mindell writes (1985a:14): 'The visual channel is usually best developed and of most interest to us. We use our sight more than our taste or hearing. Vision gives us the ability to know things at great distance, it allows us to gain emotional distance from phenomena, it organises what we normally call insight. The modern founders of psychology [Freud, Jung, Perls] began their studies with what we are now calling the visual channel'. According to Malchiodi (1998:64), '[t]he visionary mode of creativity concerned Jung ... deeply. He believed that this mode of creativity comes from our depths ... the place where archetypes reside'. This is of equal relevance in Processwork and art therapy.

However, as Helen Wells points out (personal communication via email, 18 July 2014), Processwork provides 'a framework for thinking about the other channels of communication beyond the visual channel'. These are:

*The Auditory Channel* has to do with what we *hear*, words, sounds, music - in the outside world, or inside our heads. For a wonderful example of an art therapist tuning in to her client's auditory channel, see Moon 2002:253-4.

*The Kinaesthetic Channel* has to do with *body movement*: the movement of any part of the body.

*The Proprioceptive Channel* has to do with *sensation*, what we feel in our bodies.

Channel signals may be introverted or extraverted (Mindell 1985a:18-19). Malchiodi 1998:4-5: 'In most art therapy sessions, the focus is on your inner experience – your feelings, perceptions and imagination..... [T]he emphasis is generally first on developing and expressing images that come from inside the person, rather than those he or she sees in the outside world', thus introverted rather than extraverted. I hypothesise that such images are more likely to be embodied (Schaverien 1999: 79-102).

Two other channels include experiences outside of us. They are composite channels, experienced through the sensory channels:

*The Relationship Channel* has to do with how we relate to others – and how we perceive others relating to us.

*The World Channel* has to do with the larger world of which we are a part: community, society; local, national and international affairs. The Processwork approach to this is called *Worldwork*. It is not intended to cover it in any detail in this thesis: see Appendix 2 for recommended reading.

*Channel Switching/changing:* A person will often move seamlessly from one channel into another, in which case it is the observer/therapist's role to notice and follow the change of channel. Mindell points out that '[i]t is important to be able to notice these channel switches in the work because the dreambody seems to want one to develop awareness of the various channels. The dreambody signals in one channel and then switches channels because it realizes that you have either come to the limits of what you can bear in one channel or else you are on the wrong track and need to perceive things in a totally new way' (1985b:45). The other reason he gives is that '[b]ecoming yourself can be understood as knowing your dreambody, becoming whole or round, developing your full experience through awareness of your different channels' (ibid).

*Awareness* is often mentioned in Processwork, and Mindell defines it in a very specific way (1989:148), as 'the capacity to discover and to use the channel of perception'.

*Occupied/Unoccupied Channels:*

*Channels* that are occupied are those containing the person's *primary signals/primary process*.

*Channels* through which the *secondary process/secondary signals* are expressed are said to be *unoccupied*, meaning that they are outside the person's immediate awareness, in some cases, or their control. Personally I prefer to think of channels as being *occupied* by either the primary or the secondary process - or both, as primary and secondary processes can sometimes appear in the same channel. This happens quite often in the *Kinaesthetic Channel*, as in an example related by Amy Kaplan/Mindell (1995:14-18) : here the person was 'bopping' and was aware of bopping; 'at a certain moment ... his right hand ... jerked outwards ... in a direct,

strong, flicking manner and then resumed its usual snapping and bopping rhythms'. The jerky movement was a secondary movement that didn't go along with the rhythm of his intentional, primary movements; Mindell (Arnold) inhibited the client's movement, thus amplifying it and bringing it to the client's awareness non-verbally, allowing the secondary process to be explored.

*Amplification* in Processwork is a means of bringing a person's attention to their secondary process. 'The basic idea of amplification is to discover the channel in which a dream or body process is trying to manifest itself, and to amplify according to the channel' (Mindell: 1985b:9. 'Amplifying a vision, for example, could consist of looking more closely at the details of the picture' (Kaplan/Mindell 1995:10) – as is the case in art therapy.

The *Edge*: The *edge* is the dividing line - the boundary or the frontier - between the *primary process* and the *secondary process*. We recognise *edge behaviour* in ourselves or others because of its *incongruence* (see *secondary process* above, p.47). Secondary process may often be outside our awareness, but where we become aware of it, or it is brought to our attention by someone else, we will normally experience it as strange or uncomfortable, as we don't identify with it (Mindell 1992: 43-46), and that experience is what we call an *edge*.

Amy Mindell describes it thus: 'The edge refers to the boundary between our known world and other unknown experiences. When we come to the edge, we may feel lost, or our minds may begin to drift off and become unfocussed, or a critical voice may interrupt what we are doing' (2005:226).

Art therapist, Cathy Moon, also uses the term 'edge' in describing what she calls 'boundary warnings' (2002:18). She writes, 'Maybe the boundary warnings have to

do with crossing over therapeutic taboos. All the stories that keep bobbing up are those that play along the *edge* [my italics] of what is or is not considered acceptable in therapy – crying, loving, making art, being vulnerable'. She adds, 'it gives me bobbing boundary markers. Perhaps I will obey the warnings of these buoys, or maybe I will swim defiantly past them; I might decide to ignore them, or maybe just rearrange them as I see fit [in art-making]. Who knows? They are there as my guides. It's up to me to decide when they serve as a containing sanctuary and when they are an invitation to break through and explore new territory'.

In Processwork, the Edge may be explored (see below) or respected, where it is clear to the therapist or the person themselves that they are not ready to go over that Edge, or perhaps even look at it.

*Edge experience/behaviour* is indicated by signals of discomfort, such as a sudden, unexplained change of mood, say from feeling lively to feeling tired, yawning, boredom, physical or verbal tics, stuttering/stammering, forgetting what one was going to say, giggling, surprised bursts of laughter, 'Freudian' slips, etc. Saying something one didn't intend to say – something slipping out – can indicate that one has "gone over an Edge", and may need to row back before being able to explore that Edge. In his chapter 'Stepping into the Unknown' (1998:22-32) McNiff gives a number of examples of edge behaviour, while not using this term, and says, 'I have learned that I must let "the process" follow its course'. Mindell writes that 'things should take their natural course' (1985b:8).

A *hot spot* is a group edge, as mentioned in the Introduction (p.1) along with an example of *edge behaviour*.

*Exploring the Edge*: Recognising the Edge and helping the client to explore it and, if ready, to unfold it, is central to Processwork. It is important to be able to explore the edge from the solid ground of a person's primary identity, rather than from what can feel like the shifting sands of the secondary process. There is often "resistance" at the Edge, and this should be respected. Equally, if not more important, is the *metaskill* (see below) of not regarding the client as "resistant", as if they were at fault or had control over this *state*. Rather, because the Edge indicates a secondary process and therefore the person is not/does not feel in control, it is important to respect this and offer sensitive and patient support (see Chapter Five). McNiff holds a similar view: '[I]n order for the process to become transformative, there must be a prevailing atmosphere of respect and empathy for the participants. These attitudes provide the essential environment that people need in order to risk new expressions' (1998:25). 'These attitudes' are metaskills.

*Metaskills* encompass the attitudes one brings to therapy as a therapist, such as compassion, empathy, patience, humour, etc. (Amy Mindell 1995).

An Edge with which Art Therapists are very familiar is the edge some clients have to the making of art, and art therapists are well used to exploring and negotiating that Edge. As Dalley puts it (1987:4), 'If there is resistance or reluctance on the part of the patient to enter into the art process, painting or drawing might not take place for several weeks'. What is important, as she says, is 'that the therapist concentrate on what is most significant in terms of the therapeutic interaction'; and that (in art therapy terms) '[t]he appropriate use of a particular medium is also important in this communication. Art materials are enormously versatile, and yet each has particular therapeutic properties. The introduction of paint, sand, or clay at a specific point in therapy might be crucial. Many times one hears of a situation where a patient is

“stuck” in the sense of not making any significant change, and when offered another medium immediately becomes in touch with deeper feelings which were previously buried.’ In Processwork terms, the patient is “stuck” at an Edge, and a change of materials can help the person over that Edge via a kind of channel-change: this makes me speculate as to whether each material might be regarded as a kind of channel or sub-channel of its own. This hypothesis may be borne out by Mindell’s contention that ‘[t]here is no one way of differentiating processes in terms of channels. It is important to realize that given channels reflect specific individuals and/or cultures’ (1985a:14).

In my own experience, choice of materials relates to colour, texture and a kind of “appropriateness” – what medium feels closest to what I am trying to express; therefore, for me, it is closely affiliated to *proprioception*. For others it may relate to another channel, e.g. the *visual*, *auditory* (the sound a material makes), *kinaesthetic* (how it moves), etc.; or to how we move in relation to the material or to the making of art. Art therapists are recommended to note any changes in a client’s posture over time (Sibbett, 2014), as well as sounds made: rhythm, volume, pace, etc. I noticed, when practising co-facilitation as a student with Julie Aldridge (October 2013), that she remained with her back to the group participants as they created artwork, whereas I placed myself where I could see them. When I asked her about this afterwards, she said, “You can hear”.

As indicated above, I generally experience my *relationship* with art materials through the *proprioceptive channel* mediated via the *visual channel*. I experience it as being in a *relationship channel* (‘Art as medicine does not restrict its interactions to human relationships’ McNiff 1992:1; ‘If you have not used art materials before, you may be surprised that each has its own “personality” ’ Malchiodi 1998:84); also, as maybe

being in touch with the creative force or source of creativity itself, what Amy Mindell calls 'It' (2005). Allowing myself to be materials-led ('playing with the art materials and permitting them to lead' Schaverien 1992: 87; Mindell Amy 2005:25) means I don't make an intentional (primary process) choice of materials, but enter a "don't know" state where I allow the materials to "*flirt*" with me; they attract me, they call me to them, and they draw me into the *sentient* realm (see below).

*Flirts* 'are quick, evanescent, nonverbal sensations, visual flickers, moods, and hunches that suddenly catch our attention' (Amy Mindell 2005:24; see also Chapter Three). What I experience is more like a 'hunch'. In explaining flirts (2000a:177), Mindell points that we may often 'dress ourselves so that our clothes can catch someone's attention' and goes on to say: 'Something about us wants to catch the attention of others and be known'. In my experience with art materials, it's as if the materials themselves want to catch my attention and be known via a co-creative relationship: 'It is common for a sympathetic connection to exist between the artist and the art materials' (Schaverien 1992:59). They bring me into *non-consensus reality* (see below). This also helps me over the Edge of moving from the known into the unknown, or helps me explore that Edge (see Chapter Four).

Moon has a whole chapter (2002:131-155) entitled *A Relational Aesthetic*, where she defines the term "aesthetic" as relating 'to sensory perceptions' (p.133) and adds (p.135) that "aesthetic response" 'has been described as a distinct sensory, sensual, and embodied response to what is perceived (Knill 1995; Maclagan 1999)'. In this chapter she also considers 'art making within the context of [human] relationship'.

I was reminded of my own way of relating to art materials when I came upon an exercise Mindell devised (2000a:157-8), as a way of exploring 'sentient touch',

which, as he says, 'is not like ordinary touch', it 'is different, more irrational. You need to encourage yourself to experience things that may make no sense at first'. He goes on, 'Once you experience the tendency inside the material, help that sentient experience unfold. Pretend that it is the seed of some creation trying to emerge and that your hands can sculpt and bring out this creation. Use your artistic ability; let your hands discover, then express what is in the material'. Mindell says, 'I use the term *sentience* [my italics] to refer to generally unacknowledged experiences' (1998:17) and later: "Sentient" ... refers to the continuous and automatic awareness of subtle, normally marginalized experiences and sensations' (2000a:36).

'Marginalized experiences' are secondary (Diamond and Spark Jones 2004:40).

Art therapist and Process Worker, Helen Wells describes her experience thus, 'I think art making is often accessing the sentient realm, the essence - you can feel the atmosphere drop as someone begins to make. My own sense is - when I access the sentient realm - that I drop out of everything I identify with, more or less, and become open to what's trying to come through me. That's when you have dropped to the essence level- the realm of oneness' (Personal communication via email, 17 July 2014). For a diagram relating to this, see below, p.60.

See also *Non-consensus reality* below. But first, *consensus reality*:

*Consensus Reality (CR)* refers to everyday reality, what everyone (in a given culture) agrees to be real (Amy Mindell 2005:20). In an interesting discussion (2000b:24-28) Mindell notes how, historically, Einstein has to a large extent defined what we understand as real: 'For him, and for most physicists, "real" means perceptions that people consent to as being common....Only the study of impersonal sense-perceptions is authorized by science. Thus....CR implies not only a general collective

agreement of modern international culture, but also scientific authorization.’ This has implications for psychology, which, as he says, deals with ‘the realm of direct, personal experience, dreaming, deep feeling, psyche, and personal growth. This world consists of such subjective experiences as emotions, telepathy, and so forth’ – or *Non-Consensus Reality*.

*Non-consensus Reality (NCR)* applies to subjective experiences of symptoms, dreams, fantasies, relationship issues, etc., that are not subject to external verification, yet are part of everyone’s experience; Mindell: ‘While the altered states of NCR are also real, there is no consensus on the reality of dreamlike experiences, which is considered subjective or internal’ (2000a:47); ‘[f]or example, most people will agree that a given river is about five feet deep. But most will not agree on the idea that there are demons, monsters, or mermaids in that water’ (Mindell 2000b:25). (See also: *ibid*: 25-28; Mindell 2013:157-159; Amy Mindell 2005: 20-21). NCR may include ‘non-verbal experience’ (2000a:47), such as experienced in art-making; and includes sentient experience, as described above – the experience of Essence or oneness or “the tao that can’t be said”.

Pat Allen says that ‘[the making of] images take[s] us to a state where ... everything is real and everything is magic’, where ‘[w]e learn again to play’, which ‘allows us to drop our edges and boundaries and attain the primordial sense of oneness’ (2005: 35). This is surely what Mindell describes as sentient experience. Allen’s experience accords with my own experience of how engagement with art materials can help me around and beyond edges.

In discussing the work of Prinzhorn, McNiff (1992:17-18) displays a similar understanding of how the [NCR] ‘creative expression [of Prinzhorn’s ‘mental

patients'] is a spontaneous and unconscious effort of the soul to treat itself ... without being influenced by [CR] academic and social conventions'.

There's a nice story of a Kerryman who, when asked if he believed in fairies, replied: "No – but they exist!" In answering, "No", he recognises consensus reality, but the rest of his answer indicates his acknowledgement of NCR!

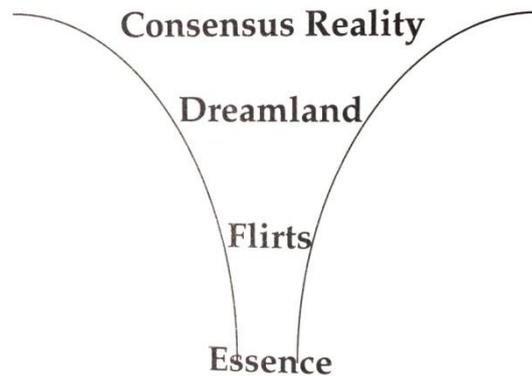
Kate Jobe in her blog (2014) divides NCR clearly into *dreamtime* and *essence/sentience* levels:

**Dreamtime** or dreamland, the dreaming, dream level, are names for the aspect of reality that is more variable and dream-like. ... Images and fantasies belong to this level of experience.

**Essence or sentience** The most subtle [level] is essence. This is experience for which we have no words or for which it is hard to find words. This is the realm of moods, atmospheres, a sense that there is something there but it has not yet emerged into consciousness.

You may have noticed similarities between *primary process* and *secondary process* and CR and NCR. Diamond and Spark Jones (2004:19) explain it thus: 'Process Work initially differentiated the flow of process in terms of "primary process" and "secondary process", separated by an "edge". Later the concepts of consensus reality, nonconsensus reality, and marginalization became used more frequently, giving greater emphasis to the role of awareness in following a process'.

Here is a diagram of the different 'dream levels' as it appears in Amy Mindell's *Dreaming Source of Creativity* (2005:20):



I hypothesise that what Schaverien (1999:87) calls the ‘diagrammatic image’, ‘which needs the elaboration of the spoken or written word’ - “the Tao that can be said” (Mindell 2000b:400) - is more likely to reflect or be closer to CR, in contrast to the ‘embodied image’ which ‘comes to combine conscious and unconscious elements’ and ‘is not immediately amenable to discourse. Its meaning becomes accessible in a way which, at the time, has no correspondence in words’ – “the Tao that can’t be said” (ibid; 2013:6; Mindell, Amy 2005:21). The latter seems closer to NCR. In summarising Schaverien writes, ‘The embodied image *embodies unconscious processes*, while the diagram may *evoke unconscious processes through associations made in relation to it*. Thus the diagram depends for its therapeutic effect on discourse subsequent to its creation’ (ibid: 102). This leads me to believe that either may bring us in touch with secondary process – or indeed *essence* - but the embodied image is likely to be the more direct route.

Again, in relation to the embodied image Schaverien (ibid:87) writes, ‘Even when there was a preconceived aim, the picture develops in unexpected ways and usually takes a form which could not have been predicted and so it may surprise even its maker. [It] may reveal previously unconscious aspects of the client’s intra-psychic

life'. Process often too 'develops in unexpected ways' that 'may surprise' (For examples, see Mindell 1985b;1992).

McNiff (1992:67) has commented on the reluctance of artists to reflect on 'manifestations of the psyche', 'fearing that once they know the nature of their conflicts, their muses will disappear'. Jan Dworkin, Process Worker and artist, writes (2003): 'I always think talking about art together with psychology is controversial and can be dangerous, depending on the psychological approach. I have no interest in reducing art to a psychological level. There is a danger of over-analyzing and this can be a creativity killer'. Processwork is itself a creative approach, akin to the expressive arts therapies. 'Experience in art therapy has repeatedly shown that meditation on the significance of the image for its maker and/or interpreter furthers, rather than obstructs, the making of art' (ibid). Unfolding processes, via Processwork works similarly; it doesn't "explain things away". Mindell (1985a:97) emphasises the importance of the experiential to integration; insight is not enough on its own ('*Insight is not change*' Allen 1995:198) – and vice versa. The experiential aspect of art therapy, especially when the image is embodied (see above), combined with the artist's ability to interpret and understand their own work, meet both criteria.

*Embodiment* in Processwork, however, refers to our own experience in and of our bodies. There is, I believe, a relationship between that and the embodied image, through the proprioceptive channel, in that the embodied image is an expression of feelings; it often goes beneath the surface, expressing unconscious elements also, which can be felt in and through the body. There is a deep and intimate communion between artist, art materials and resulting art piece via body sensations, in the process of art-making. The result can often impact on the viewer also – the 'Wow' factor. Wood (1998:34) writes of the 'bodyliness' of art therapy and the

interrelationship of mind and body, though she contends that this is 'extremely difficult to experience'. I suggest that Processwork makes this relatively easy.

Jobe writes (2014): 'The importance of experiencing dream images as body experiences cannot be over stated'. Embodied images may be equated with dream images, and the making of them is, in my experience, an embodied experience. It therefore behoves us, as art therapists, to embrace this experience and bring awareness to it; this experiential knowing is quite different to intellectual understanding. You know because you've been there (See *Channel-switching* above, p.51). I have no doubt that this equates with What McNiff calls '[a]rtistic knowing' which, as he says, differs from 'intellectual knowing' (1998a:36).

Of the *Tao*, Mindell says, 'People have always thought of the Tao as the curvature of space-time, the geometry in which we live' (2000b:400).

*Process v. State*: *Process* indicates when things are moving, *state* indicates when things are static or stuck (Goodbread 1997:35). It is often when people are feeling "stuck", that they turn to psychotherapy or other means to get "moving" again. States may be momentary or may last literally for years. "Stuckness" often indicates an Edge to a secondary process (see Dalley pp. 54-55 above). Often when we are in a "state", we "edge away" from actually examining it. Processwork aims to help us do so, and to transform the experience, via its exploration, from the stuckness of a state to the movement of a process. This is usually very relieving – and enlightening - for the person concerned! In using the term "enlightening", I am thinking of both "shining a light" on the subject and how much "lighter" – like a weight has lifted off – the person often feels following the unfolding of a state and the discovery of the secondary process behind it. As Helen Wells says, 'A basic tenet of POP is that the

seed of what is trying to emerge lies in the disturbance we are experiencing ... That would be what POP adds to art therapy- a framework for thinking about what's emerging' (personal communication via email, 18 July 2014).

*Dreaming Up (Transference and countertransference)*: According to Mindell (1985a:41), 'Freud originally meant [transference] to connote the projection of infantile problems onto the therapist', whereas Jung 'showed ... how the transference implied not only the projection of family figures but also' archetypal figures. Further, 'Jung indicated how relationship problems such as those which occurred during analysis took place in a collective [alchemical] "bath", a milieu in which one could no longer divide the therapist's individuation process, his complexes and conscious problems from those of the so-called patient'. Mindell refers to what happens in this milieu as 'dreaming up': that the therapist can be dreamt up by the client (counter-transference) or vice-versa (transference) and that they dream each other up (into particular roles) in a common *field*. In the counter-transference, '[t]he therapist has unwittingly become an expression or channel of the client's process, a channel carrying signals and messages which the client is not aware of in himself and which he may not care to become aware of' (ibid:42). As Diamond and Spark Jones point out (2004:27), 'dreaming up' often happens as a result of 'double signals' (see pp. 48 & 54 above).

*Field*: Mindell gives an example from family therapy of a psychological approach that uses field theory (2000a:176): 'Think of how the "identified patient", often projected onto the child in a family, plays the role of the suffering individual, which no one else wants to identify with. As soon as one of the adults picks up the suffering and speaks of herself or himself, the child frequently improves. All the parts of the system are interconnected'. He adds that Jung had 'a sort of intrapsychic field theory', in that he

'noticed how the figures in the dreams of two people in a partnership are interconnected'; 'somewhat like ... [a] pair of photons, Jung imagined the man's "anima" and the woman's "animus" to be inextricably linked'.

*Rank:* See Chapter Six and Appendix 1.

I'd like to end this chapter with Mindell's remark (1985b:4) that '[k]nown therapies may appear in this work and completely new and undiscovered procedures may spontaneously appear, applicable for only that moment and situation'. From much that I have cited above and throughout this thesis, there is evidence that this can also be said of art therapy, and that there is much to gain from knowledge of different approaches.

\* Mindell apologises 'for using old terms in a new way, since it may be complicated to learn new terms or use old ones in a slightly new manner... I have tried to retain older terms as much as possible but have had to develop new meanings for older terms frequently marginalize the Dreaming and sentient background to reality. I hope you can share my experience of words; they are important only insofar as they point back to experiences that can barely be formulated' (2000:35).

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## Chapter Three

### ***Flirts and Second Attention***

*Flirts are quick, evanescent, non-verbal sensations, visual flickers, moods, and hunches that suddenly catch our attention.*

**Amy Mindell (2005:20)**

Noticing 'flirts' is a way of catching and tuning into the dreaming that is going on all the time. To catch them, you need to develop *second attention*, so that you do not dismiss them or brush them away. To quote Mindell on the subject:

**Quantum flirts happen all the time, every time something catches your attention just before you pay attention and observe it. Quantum flirts are very rapid, easily marginalized NCR [non-consensus reality] experiences basic to all observation. They come from your deepest, barely verbalizable sentient experience, and are flickering events apparently arising from the Unus Mundus. This one world is the world of dreaming: it is non-local (everywhere at one time), not temporal (linked with the past and future), and non-consensual (has no agreement with others who are not in your framework) (Mindell, 2000:365)**

On 3 February 2014, a windy, rainy day, I was looking out my kitchen window when I noticed a branch bobbing in the breeze. Did I notice it or did it call to me? It certainly attracted my attention. I immediately thought, “It’s my Dragon. The BFD is in my back garden”. The BFD (Big Friendly Dragon) is a luminous Disney-like dragon that appeared in the first ‘big dream’ (Jung 1928/1965:4) that I remember having, I think in 1989, when I attended a series of Dream Interpretation classes. Around the end of that year or into 1990, I made a mandala that featured him/her. In one image I have, she looks pregnant, so I guess that makes her a she. The image of the BFD has been with me ever since, and particularly in the three years of this Masters programme in Art Therapy. She is a bit over my Edge, representing warmth, light, energy and courage that I know I could use, but have not been fully able to identify with – but I’m beginning to. She is now in my back garden, so close to home.



**BFD Mandala**



**Dragon Flirt**

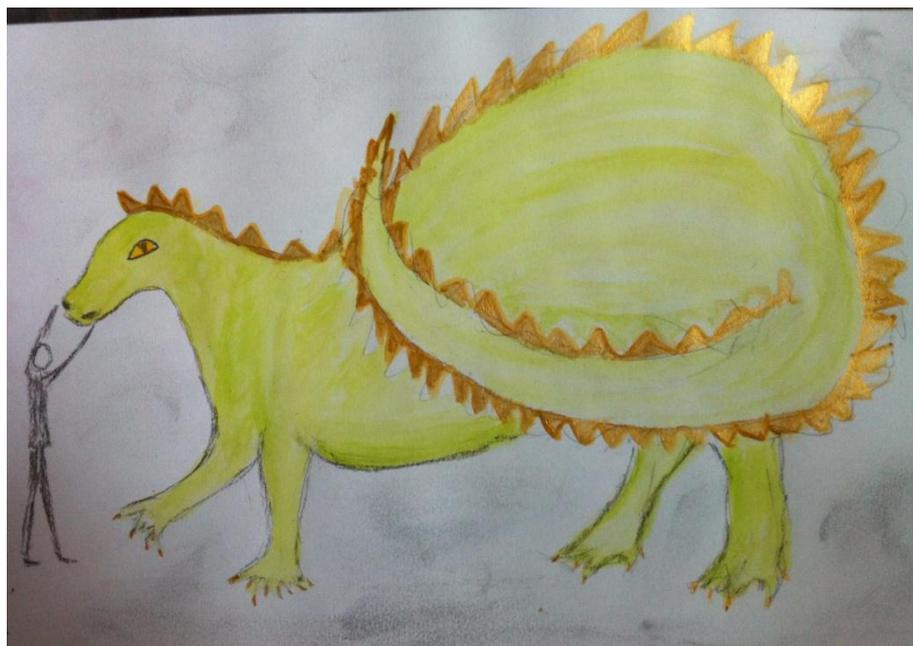


**Dragon Image**

Since then (21February 2014), she appeared in my bathroom as I stepped out of the shower, even though I had never noticed her there before, so very close !

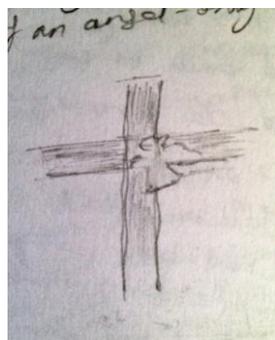


This brings to mind an image I made in January 2012, where I, the little boy in the dream, now grown to adolescent, befriend the BFD:



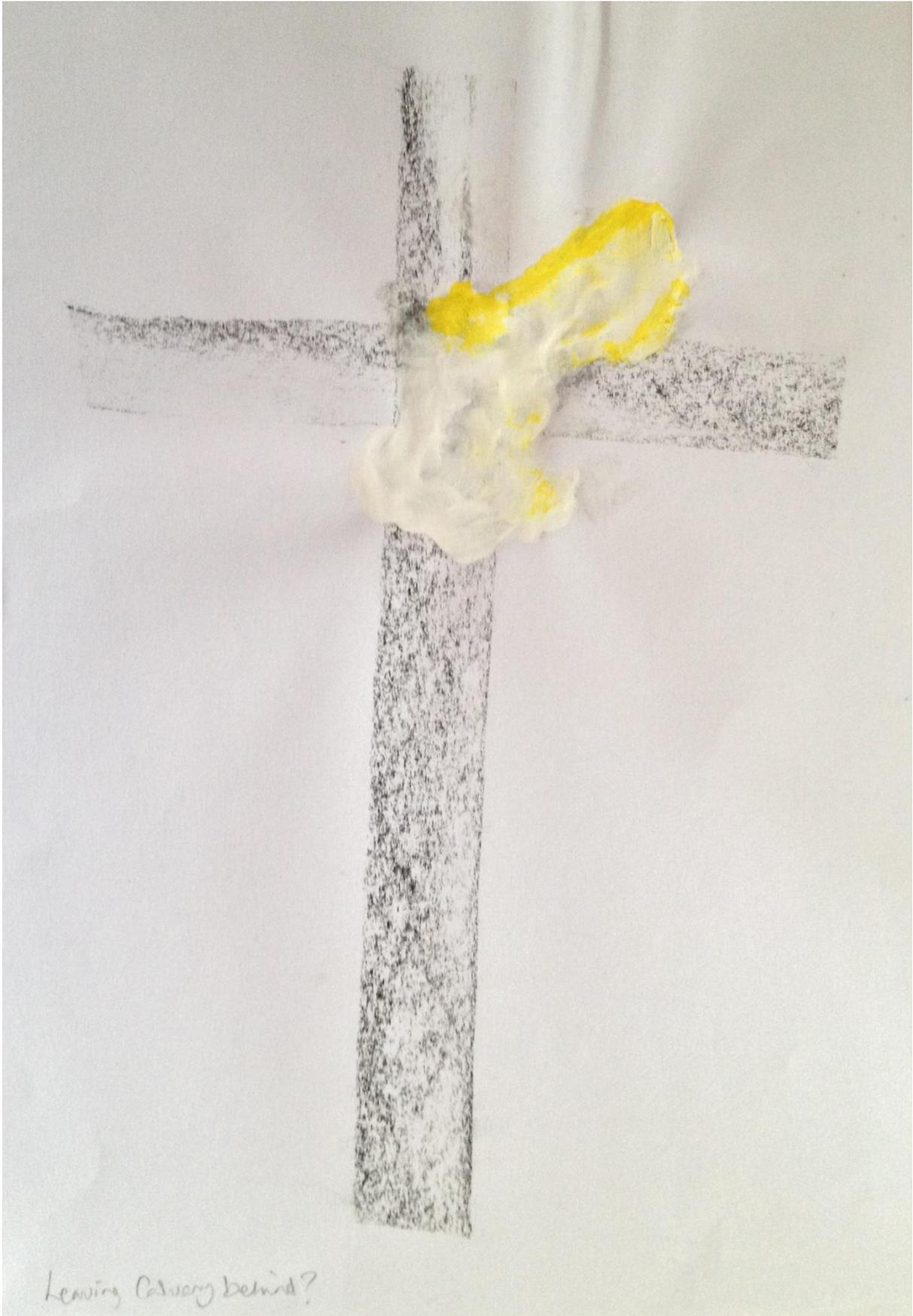
Prior to commencing the art therapy training, I have had many flirts but have not made pictures of them. Apart from the mandala, the only dragon images that had 'flirted' with me were a greetings card of what is possibly a friendly dinosaur, but which I saw as my dragon, and a cheerful stuffed dragon bought in a souvenir shop in Wales. It is only since starting the training nearly three years ago that I started making more images, first of scenes from the original big dream, and since then of how the 'dragon dreaming' is evolving. It seems to be evolving much faster and more coherently since I started recording it in concrete imagery of my own making. For me, this is where artwork and Process Work meet. The images themselves are static rather than process-like, but they mark stages on the way and, seen together, are evidence of the dreaming process.

Another recent example: I was sitting up in bed writing in my Learning Journal about a workshop the previous day, where imagery of death and rebirth/resurrection had emerged. I glanced at the mirror opposite, thinking it needed cleaning (CR). I was drawn to shapes I saw on the mirror, of a cross with a white smudge on it that reminded me of an angel (NCR). Was this too a death/rebirth image? I made a little sketch.



*Angel flying from cross*

Days later I made a bigger image on an A4 page – reproduced on next page: it indicated that it required a page to itself, so I complied.



Leaving Calvary behind?

When I made it, using charcoal for the cross and white paint for the angel, it asked for yellow, lemon yellow, a colour I associate with a baby I lost via miscarriage (actually 19 years ago today, the day I am writing this, 17 February 1995); and with light. She seems to be missing a wing, though it doesn't seem to hamper her – unless she's hanging from the cross? As she was a twin, and the other twin was born at term, but died at one year old, I feel that she and her sister, both since returned to spirit, may share a pair of wings? Or she could relate to my dragon, as the colour yellow does also, and my dragon, until recently, had no wings – so maybe they have to grow? Maybe I have to grow wings – take wing and fly? A lot of my imagery early on in the course, was of wings and flying. The first image (see p. 119) I stuck in my Learning Journal is a card made by a friend on yellow card encouraging me to 'Go fly' (thus my process is appearing in the Relationship and World channels, and not just in my own personal channels).

Since writing this, I was again drawn to 'my' friendly dragon bobbing at me from the garden, when I noticed branches forming the shape of a dragon's wing, resulting in this image:



I think she's letting me know that she and the yellow-winged angel are one and the same, as is the twin daughter whose colour is yellow, representing light, who is helping me in spirit to 'see', by developing my observational skills and especially my *second attention*, thereby to 'shed light' on things. She, along with her twin, whose colour, pink, is for compassion, is indicating the *metaskills* (Mindell Amy 1995) I need to develop and grow into as a therapist. But I'll need to grow another wing before I can really fly!

Some days later, in a workshop on the number 6, we were read a Grimm's fairytale (with six swan brothers) that resembled the story of the Children of Lir. This reminded me of the twin I lost, whose name was Fionnuala, like the big sister in The Children of Lir. The consequence was this image:



*Coming Together! March 5, 2014*

This is another example of an *Over-the-Edge Image* (see previous chapter), a preview of what needs to happen, a way of exploring that possibility. Image-making can be helpful in exploring the edge, particularly via proprioception – paying attention to what one is feeling as one works, respecting any resistance one feels, noticing any difficulties one encounters, such as not being to being able to find or work with materials of choice, not being to make the exact colour one wants, etc. Artistic blocks – or edges - can be protective! The timing may not be right, and the block/edge may dissolve after a period of internal processing, conscious or unconscious. Allen writes (1995:198), '*Images are predictive. Images show what is going on in our inner life. The outward manifestation of what the image represents may not be apparent until long after the image appears*'.

In the image above, the wool insisted on making an “Earth Mother” shape, although I tried to turn it into a conventional “angel”. After a couple of tries, I gave up and followed the wool, resulting in this “Earth Mother”-type figure, very solid, quite meditative, reminding me of both Mary, “the Mother of God” and Kwan Yin, the Chinese Bhodisattva of Compassion, sometimes called “Mary of the East”: I was called Mary after the first; the second has become a “guiding light” in my life (again bringing together both light and compassion). For all that, I am not particularly enamoured of this image! I don't find it aesthetically or artistically satisfying – another edge to be explored.

Since then (July 2014), in a group art therapy session, I was asked to pick a card that aroused an emotion. I picked this picture of a pair of mallard:



What struck me was how they are looking away from one another. I had been given paper and paint. In my head, I saw a pair of wings. That didn't seem to rightly express what I first saw as two individuals moving away from each other. However, my hand was at one with my head, as I took brown paint and painted a pair of wings:



I added a head, looking down, and bits of blue to represent the bird being lifted by rising air currents; also the beginnings of a body. Afterwards, while chatting about it with art therapist, Michelle Dunne, I moved my arms

like wings and could feel that “uplift” as support. I thought of the hymn: ‘And I will lift you up, on eagle’s wings ...’. Later I looked the words up on the internet; in copying it (just the chorus) I change the words ‘He’ and ‘his’ to ‘I’ and ‘my’:

*And I will raise you up on eagle’s wings,*

*Bear you on the breath of dawn,*

*Make you to shine like the sun,*

*And hold you in the palm of my hand.*

(Original words by Michael Joncas)

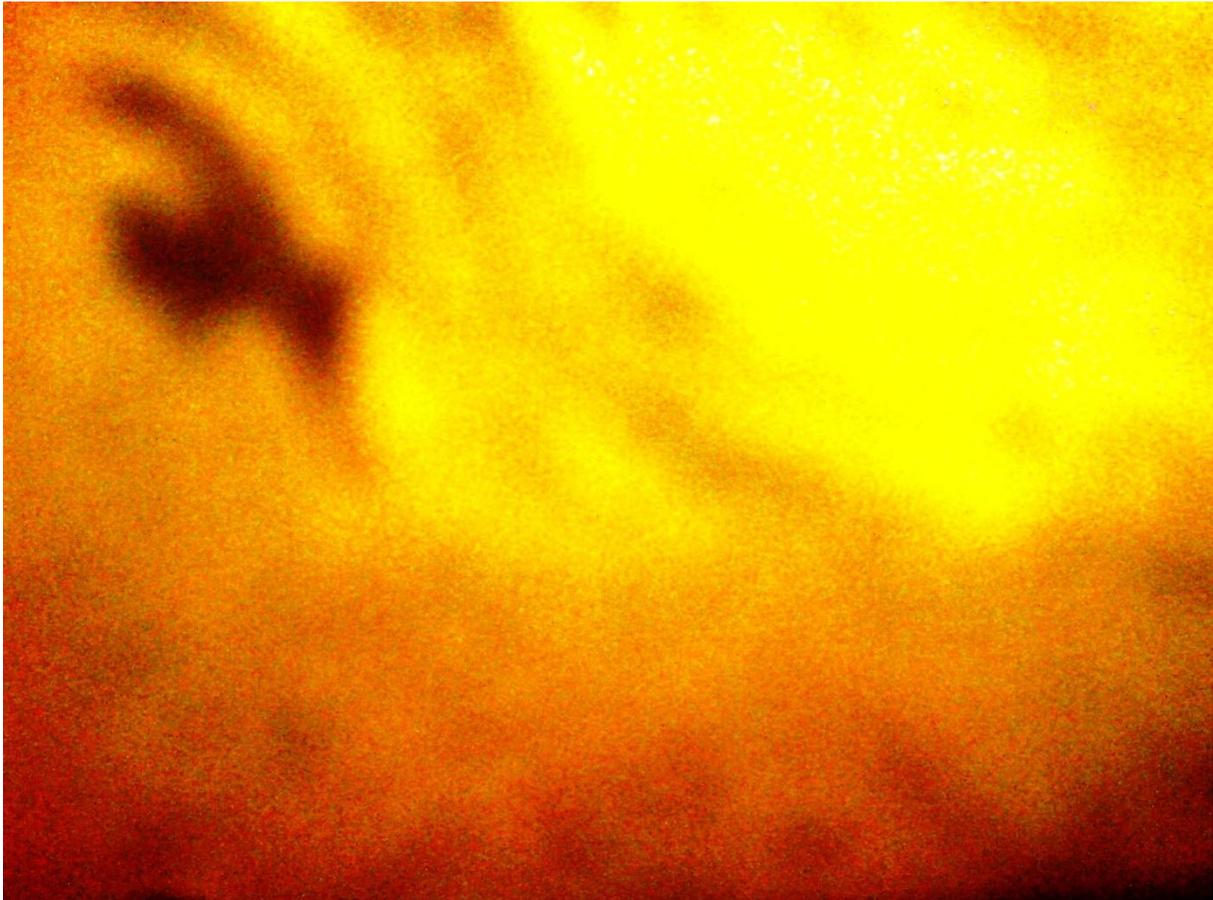
Apart from noting that there are two channel-switches here, from the visual channel to the movement/kinaesthetic channel, and from that to the auditory channel, I am bowled over by the experience. Mindell writes, ‘At the core of dreambodywork lie the fascinating phenomena which I call channel switching. Processes can switch suddenly from hearing to feeling, from feeling to visualization, or from seeing to moving, like lightening. If you can follow processes as they move in and out of the body, you are then able to move with the flow of life, and sometimes witness surprising things’ (1985:37). What surprised me was that I found myself again in the visual channel, this time remembering a shamanic journey I had made several years ago, while on a shamanic retreat-cum-workshop in Kerry with shiatsu practitioner, Neil Gulliver. At dawn on an overnight ‘vision quest’, I noticed in the sky a cloud in the shape of a huge, hovering eagle.

This came back to me now, with a slight shock of recognition: Is this why I chose to paint the bird brown, rather than as the seagull I felt like when moved to “fly”? (I make a mental note that we can be “moved” physically or emotionally; in fact I felt both were involved, both proprioception and kinaesthesia).

I wrote in my journal about the “wings facing in opposite directions, but joined in the middle” and that the “expression of opposites came out more as a mirroring and balancing”. They are joined by the body, which both centres them and provides “embodiment”.

‘Make you to shine like the sun’, in the hymn, recalls related patterns and themes in my art-making and dreaming: Light, my daughter Fionnuala, the Big Friendly Dragon. I feel held by ‘And I will hold you in the palm of my hand’.

Hovering in my mind since writing the above has been a photo I took of a postmark on a brown envelope back in November 2010, by zooming in with my mobile phone – a form of amplification. The dark mark, which reminds me of a bird, was made by a drop of water. I wrote at the time: “I love the colours! It reminds me of an eagle flying into the sun”. Today (20 July 2014) I amplified it again by playing around with the colours till it reminded me even more forcibly of seeing an eagle in the clouds at first light in Kerry all those years ago – another example of dreaming over the edge. To me it is the perfect illustration for ‘I will lift you up on eagle’s wings’, containing, as it does, the sun:



This is all part of my 'personal myth' (Mindell 1985:47) which, as you can see, I have been following for years. Psychologically the personal myth helps us make sense of our lives and gives us a sense of direction, and indications of our path in life. Mindell writes:

**'If you are quick enough to observe a channel switch, flexible enough to work with visualization, proprioception, audition, kinesthesia and with parapsychological events happening on the street which grab your attention, then you'll be able to follow your own and other people's process, and be aware of which direction your are headed in this life.'** (ibid.)

### ***Suggestions for working/playing with 'flirts' with examples***

One way to access 'flirts' is to allow your eyes to become cloudy or fuzzy, and in that state to look around you and notice if anything attracts your attention. Remaining in that state, notice what it is about it, what you imagine/d it to be – like when we see shapes in clouds, like my eagle above. Allow yourself to think that way and then make a picture of it, or write about it. Once you have completed doing so, ask yourself what relevance it may have to you or your life. Could you use some of whatever quality it expresses in your life?

Once you have practised this, and become familiar with doing it, you could introduce it to individual clients or in a group, as a means of accessing *secondary processes*, hovering just outside conscious awareness, which can then be brought closer to awareness via artwork. These may start to unfold their meaning through the making of art, which may unfold further via reflecting on it with another/others – perhaps even by simply standing back from it oneself. Or it may unfold more slowly over time; sometimes when we return to an image, we see things in it we hadn't seen before.

If a sound attracts your *second attention*, it may need to be amplified in its own, *auditory channel* first, by listening to it carefully, making it louder, if it's a loud sound, softer if it's a soft sound, sharper, if a sharp sound, etc. It may then *switch channels*, perhaps into movement (*kinaesthesia*), e.g. a sharp movement. Or it could lead to a sharp image, or invite sharp movement of implement on paper, for instance.

Another approach, which I was introduced to on Process Work seminars in the 1990s, is to have people walk around the room noticing whatever is 'not just walking'. Are you leaning to one side? If so, amplify/exaggerate that. Are you moving your head, arms, any part of your body in a particular way? Amplify that. Does your step have a particular quality – heavy, light, quick, slow? Exaggerate that, whatever it is. Is there a noise you notice that you make while walking? Amplify that. Quickly or slowly, a figure will emerge, and you may begin to have feelings about that figure – what it feels like to be it, so that it starts to become a role. Maybe it will remind you of someone you know, or of a figure from a myth, a movie, a fairytale – or from history. Maybe this person/creature has a message for you. You may be able to role-play this with someone else, or at least tell them about it. In the context of art therapy, you may like to draw, paint or sculpt that figure – or create a costume for it.

Moon (2002:57-8) gives a very good example of doing just that, at a time when she felt 'cast [by a student she was evaluating] unfairly in the role of the evil witch' and that she was perceived 'as the "critical mother" figure'. She says, 'I engaged with the distasteful, evil, critical mother part of me by giving her a forum to express herself through art'. The result was "The Bitch Queen", a 3D figure in full regalia. 'In the process ...I discovered there were things I liked about her. I found her to be strong, spunky and unafraid to speak her mind', also that she was playful, with a sense of humour, and that she didn't 'want to lose her'. Such is inevitably, in my experience, the outcome, when an apparently negative or critical figure is explored and unfolded in Process Work. They always have something

useful to impart to us. When we can own them as part of ourselves, they can be quite empowering.

Amy Mindell has lots of ideas for accessing and using flirts creatively in her book *The Dreaming Source of Creativity*. I particularly like her 'experiment' (2005:78), suggesting putting a sock on one hand, as a prelude to making a sock puppet, and to then 'look at it, ... be with it, ... gaze at it, sensing what being or creature [is] trying to emerge from within that sock'.

You can 'flirt' with any material or materials and see what emerges; try some of the exercises suggested by Marian Liebmann in *Art Therapy for Groups* (2004).

Using clay can be helpful in accessing the proprioceptive channel, or indeed the visual (imaginative) channel, or both – or others. McNiff writes (1998:29) that '[c]lay is an excellent medium for experimenting with the way shapes emerge from the unknown'. Two examples here, entitled 'Paw' and 'Heart-in-hand', demonstrate this:



'Paw' came about in a workshop at the beginning of second year (September 2012), where we were asked to focus on the coming year. At first I chose paper, but then thought it would lead to me doing something "diagrammatic": that's the word I wrote in my learning journal, before reading about Schaverien's contrasting of 'diagrammatic' and 'embodied' images (1999:85). I put the paper away and turned to clay: 'Clay is a familiar art therapy material which features tactile expression and experiences. When hands touch clay in a therapeutic setting, exteroceptors and interoceptors become naturally stimulated, and every movement of the hands provides instant feedback to the brain.... The use of the hands as a tool of perception is known as haptic perception'. (Elbrecht and Antcliff, 2014:19).

While unaware of haptic perception at the time of making 'Paw', I was aware of my own proprioceptive and kinaesthetic experience. My experience was rather of a kind of flirtatious relationship with the clay; Amy Mindell records many such experiences with materials in *The Dreaming Source of Creativity* (2006). As I recorded in my journal, "I pressed [the clay] with my thumbs, using my whole body like I would for shiatsu (I used to be a shiatsu practitioner – a massage therapist; shiatsu means thumb-pressure, in Japanese), turning it and folding it, then pressing it again, a bit like kneading bread .... I was enjoying doing it, and waiting to see if a form would emerge. After a while, ... I saw a paw emerging". Once that happened, I consciously shaped toes and claws and used a brush to simulate hair. I continued in my Journal: "To me the piece was about earthing myself and staying grounded for the year whatever happens, be

that in college, on placement, in work, at home... So choosing clay/earth was important. Its heaviness/weight was important". 'Paw' became a kind of talisman for me for that year.

'Heart-in-hand' came about a little differently. During Training Group, in the same year, I became upset after a classmate had criticised me quite forcefully, just before we turned to art-making. This time I immediately sought out clay, knowing how it can help with feelings, due to its tactile qualities. Elbrecht & Antcliff (ibid), 'Touch is one of the fundamental human experiences .... Touch is the basis for secure attachment, linked to earliest body memories, to the ability to handle the world, to sexuality and injury'. I felt quite "rocky" in relation to my 'ability to handle the world', quite vulnerable and childlike. I turned to Mother Earth: I started by making a ball of clay, pressing my thumbs into the clay to make a "thumb pot". Once it was of a size that I could hold in both hands, I did so, and as I squeezed it slightly, it formed itself into the shape of a heart; that's how it felt – I didn't make a conscious decision to make a heart-shaped container, but that's what happened. As I held it, it felt like it was holding me, containing me, and for a while I couldn't put it down. But, through the experience, I learned that I could meet my own needs, look after myself in the moment, and process the feelings which, via the choice of material, transformed from upset to self-compassion, and also compassion for the person by whom I had felt attacked. I felt I had gone over an edge and discovered, and could identify with, a more "able" part of myself, which had been secondary only a short time before.

Another way of using *second attention* to access *secondary process* visually is via the use of Rory's Story Cubes ([www.storycubes.com](http://www.storycubes.com)). I am immensely grateful to fellow-final-year Art Therapy students (2013-2014), Eilish Breslin and Kate Stoica, who introduced these when facilitating a group of us. We were each asked to select a cube. The one that appealed to me included these three images, which I saw as shamanic:



This led me to make the mask shown below, and to being reminded how much I was drawn to the shamanic while still a shiatsu practitioner before discovering Processwork and Mindell's interest in shamanism (Mindell 1993), and coming across it again in relation to art therapy via Shaun McNiff (1992) – and that I hope to include a shamanic approach in my own practice, with a view to helping others *become their own shaman*. I should mention that this crystallised for me when listening to Declan Hammond, homeopath, speak on his own shamanic practice at the Critical Voices conference in Cork on 14 November 2013.



See also the suggested use of Tarot cards in the chapter on *Over-the-Edge Images*.

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## OVER-THE-EDGE IMAGES

*'Each form is the frozen temporary image of a process. Thus any work merely represents a staging point in the process of becoming, not a fixed goal.'*

(El Lissitzky: *Life, Letters, Texts*, quoted in Dalley et al, 1987).

Process Work posits that we “dream over the edge” (Mindell & Mindell, 1992:46), in other words that we dream about the things that we cannot yet do but are on the “edge” of doing: where we need to go next, or will go eventually. Recently I dreamt that the rest of my current Learning Journal, in which writing predominates, was full of pictures, page after page of pictures, completely filling every page, and no words; I was showing it to others with great delight and even pride that I’d achieved this. On remembering it, I thought, “What a wonderful dream!” and was happy to think that it might be realised. Since then, the ratio of pictures to writing has reversed and images now predominate.

I propose to show how images made in art therapy sessions might perform a similar function, with the added advantage that they are preserved and can be referred back to, ‘for it is the privilege of the artist to combine the ambiguity of dreaming with the tensions of being fully awake’ (Dalley 1987:3). As Schaverien says (2005:138) in a different context, ‘dreams differ from pictures, in that they are intangible, elusive and ephemeral whilst pictures have a concrete and material presence’. Furthermore, ‘Reviewing art expressions created during several weeks or months literally allows

one to see changes and patterns in thoughts, feelings, events and themes over time' (Malchiodi 1998:14).

I have found keeping a written record of the art-making process in my Learning Journal helpful in recalling the experience of art-making, including details I might have forgotten. Likewise, keeping a record of one's dreams can be helpful, and I now sometimes make pictures of striking images from my dreams alongside the written record. See examples below:



According to Mindell (Bodian1990), 'dreams are only snapshots of the river [that is the "dreaming process"]'. Likewise images are snapshots of a particular moment in time, and need to be seen in that context, as contributing to the ongoing story or process.

On 15 February 2013, at a workshop in college we were asked to consider our feelings about doing a thesis, by making an art piece. At the time, I think I'm okay with the idea of doing a thesis – even quite looking forward to doing it? – or at least to the achievement of having done it! That's my *primary process*.

### Art-making process: Image 1

I have a notion that I need to experience art-making through all the senses. I look around for suitable materials. I use my *second attention* for this – see what *flirts* with

me. In art therapy terms – or as an artist, I think of this as the co-creative thing that happens, in my experience anyway, between artist and materials: how you have an idea, but not a fixed or complete idea of what you want to do, just a sense or feeling, maybe a starting point; how you can put that out there and trust that you will be led to what you need, to find the materials that will express what you wish to express – and that sometimes they find you. Moon (2002:34) calls it a ‘co-operative venture’. Amy Mindell says that ‘It creates’ (2005:79), *it* being the *Intentional Field* (Mindell, Amy 2004:3-14; 26) that is always there in the background. She suggests ‘using a few materials to get in touch with the flow of the Intentional Field’ (ibid: 25), ‘an ever-flowing stream that can be stepped into at any time for creative inspiration whether we are working on a creative project or simply moving through our everyday life’ (ibid:15). McNiff also uses the term ‘It’, defining it as ‘a force that moves within... that is distinctly “other” and not subject to control... It is the primary carrier of creation’ (1998:24-25).

Now, back to the workshop:

To start, I place some woolly fun fur on a tray. It reminds me of a fleece; it’s the same colour as the fleece I used to lay my last baby, who died, on; I also think of the Golden Fleece – the quest. I find a small container – egg-cup size, with an old gold patina on it, and try different places before putting it in the middle. I then select a skein of burnt orange wool and place the loose end of it in the pot: starting point or finishing point? It feels a bit like the Holy Grail. I trail the wool around, back and forth, overlapping, returning it on itself till it seems like enough, but I feel unable to cut it, so lay the rest in the top right corner. Then I do the something similar – but less so – with dark brown wool, placing it in the top left corner. Finally – or so I believe – I take some pinkish wool. Pink is the colour I associate with the daughter mentioned

above, who is an inspiration to me; and also with compassion, an essential quality in a therapist. So that's quite close to my *primary* process; whereas the other choices of colour and material that I have made up to now, I have made intuitively, without really knowing why, so they feel quite *secondary*. On the other hand, feeling my way like that is quite known to me and I guess I do identify with it, while having a slight *edge* to it; I am not sure of its acceptability in *consensus reality*, but I can also say that the *proprioceptive channel* is *occupied* (Notice how many times I use the word 'feel'). I make a loop of the pink wool and place it around the container, then continue to circle the wool more or less concentrically till I feel able to cut it and put the rest away. I pick up a cardboard cone holding yellow wool and knock the open end against my palm, making a sound – the missing *channel* (sense).



The *visual* is represented by the image itself; there was *movement* (*kinaesthesia*) in the making of it; I was aware of how I felt while doing it - quite meditative, thus

*proprioception*; and finally, sound: the *auditory* channel, added by my primary identity.

On completing the piece I had to leave the room to use the bathroom. Doing so sometimes creates distance for me, like standing back from the image. As I was outside the room, I suddenly thought, "It's a bit woolly", and that seemed to sum it up for me. It strikes me now (February 2014) how important it was to me that the piece be expressed through as many *channels* as possible and that this points towards Processwork. Despite that, I felt quite uncertain and undecided at the time as to what the subject of my thesis should be. Was I *dreaming over the edge* (as explained above)?

As I carry the art piece into the circle where my fellow students and I will share our experiences, I spot a silver sequin on the floor, pick it up and drop it into the 'pot' in the middle. That seems important: the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow? Hidden/buried treasure? I know the silver 'coin' is there, but it's not immediately obvious to the viewer, as it is out of sight unless viewed from above.

I share that the image seems to represent for me that the prospect of doing a thesis seems endless and convoluted (the wool that I couldn't cut): that that may not just be to do with the thesis, it could also be to do with this being an endless exploration for me – a lifetime's work - which is fine by me. In fact that's probably easier to entertain as an idea (less *edgy*) than the strictures of the thesis, according to which something specific has to be produced within a limited time. [I note that I have used the passive rather than the active voice in the last sentence, as I am not yet ready to take personal responsibility for the thesis by saying that *I* have to produce a thesis within a limited time - so it's definitely still over my edge!].

The pink wool, on the other hand, I was able to cut – contain? limit? While being aware (*primary process*) that for me it represented compassion and holding, it also seems hopeful (more *secondary*) of containing the process and making it manageable – maybe like the little sequin in the pot – one piece, rather than all the pieces of gold or silver (that might be in a treasure pot)? I’m thinking now (February 2014), that having since gone *over my edge* to choosing a topic for my thesis, which took until June 2013, I may need to limit what could become a huge topic to one *piece* or aspect.

At the end of the session, after I’d photographed it, I “unmade” the piece, rewinding the wool and returning all the elements to where I’d found them (leaving the sequin in the pot). “Rewind” now makes me think of rewinding a movie or a tape. Allowing the materials to be reused or recycled seemed important. It reminded me how Processwork values the recycling of experience. Taking this seriously, using my second attention (Chapter Three), I went in search of a quotation. This is what I found: ‘The metaskill of compassion requires that we focus on unusual and unwanted experience, and don’t simply toss it in the garbage. Rather, we notice it, pick it up and, like the medieval alchemist, cook it until its gold or secret is revealed. Compassion leads us to become modern-day ecologists and recycle not only plastics and paper but also experiences we would normally discard!’ (Mindell, Amy 1995:79). I was amazed, when I found this quote, at its synchronicity with the themes mentioned above in relation to “It’s a bit Woolly”. I really was dreaming over the edge!

“It’s a bit woolly” also reminds me of the value of ‘wooliness’, of not knowing, and of ‘becoming cloudy’, as often encouraged in Process Work. Amy Mindell suggests

learning to adopt 'a *cloudy* or *foggy mind*; one that is unfocused and open, similar to an empty mind or a beginner's mind in Zen Buddhism' (2005: 56).



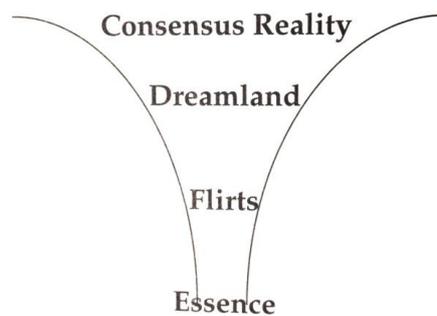
## Image 2

Not long into the following academic year (2013-2014), towards the end of October, at a workshop on the theme of 'water', I made the next image. I did not until recently relate it to my thesis, but it seems to provide a link between the previous image and the following one.



It is made of clay with streamers of silver tissue paper representing water springing from a source. Now it reminds me of the pot in the centre of the last image, even the

silver streamers recalling the silver sequin in the earlier pot. It also links to my next image which is also of a water source – Waters of Life? It reminds me too of Arnold Mindell’s vase-like diagram describing dimensions, or levels, of awareness (as reproduced by Amy Mindell (2005:20):



When I think of Essence, I think of the Source, the essential no-thing-ness from which every ‘thing’ arises. (Re flirts: see Chapter Three).

### Image 3

The third image shown here was made in during personal therapy with art therapist, Alma McQuade:



It shows what might be a volcano, in that it is one of a series of volcanic images I have made; but rather than potentially spewing fire, it is a source of water. I imagine the hollow grottos within, and perhaps an underground river or lake from which the water is drawn, becoming the source of a stream. Interestingly, the water flows uphill before it goes over the top – the edge – and downhill. This is a good illustration of the edge I was at to getting started on the Literature Review for this thesis. Once I got over that edge, the process of writing started to flow, and hopefully will continue to do so! (February 2014).

Images can also help us over the edge. On January 20, 2014, Emily Power-Smith\*, sexologist and art therapist, gave an ‘Introduction to Sex Positivity’ to art therapy students, including myself, at Crawford College of Art and Design, which is part of Cork Institute of Technology. Afterwards, we divided into small groups and created images based on our impressions and feelings, which we then shared. This was mine, which I titled “Sexual Response”:



I chose beige, almost “nude”- colour sugar paper and soft pink wool, which I spiralled into circles, to form what could be breasts, buttocks or even testicles. Underneath I rolled up some of the wool to represent the clitoris. Beneath that again is a flower, which for me represented the expansiveness of sexual feeling, especially orgasm, and also fertility. I used PVA (glue) to stick down the wool and the flower. The stickiness reminded me of semen particularly, and how I don’t always like that sticky feeling on my hands! That’s why I also stuck down the bits of tissue paper I had used to wipe them. I drew in some buttocks, which, as a child I thought of as “rude”. In sharing with the group afterwards, I actually stroked the soft “clitoris” as I was speaking about it. That would have been way over my edge right up to then! I was helped to feel okay and safe to talk more freely about sexual matters by Power-Smith’s matter-of-fact approach that morning, by the acceptance of the smaller group I found myself in, and also by the process and fact of making the image: the fact that both the experience and the outcome were tactile; the fact that it bore witness to things I might have had difficulty saying without its support, without it as evidence. It was like a precursor, preparing the way, allowing me to move from one *channel*, the *visual*, (albeit that it included in the making both the *kinaesthetic* and the *proprioceptive*) to the *auditory* – hearing myself speak and allowing others to hear me speak, and also, of course the *relationship channel* and even a little bit of the *world channel*!

A good example of helping a client over the edge to using art materials so commonly encountered by art therapists, and into her secondary process, is contained in Jackie Coote’s story of ‘Eileen’ (1998:55-6). Using her metaskills, especially empathy, and observational skills, Coote is able to help Eileen over her edge to art-making by giving her simple materials and making a suggestion which gets her started. Eileen

moves quickly from the kinaesthetic channel, where all art-making starts, to the visual channel, and from there to the auditory channel, telling her story. Coote immediately recognises that her drawing and her story of her empty house is a metaphor for how she is feeling about herself.

I have used Processwork terms to describe how Coote followed the client's process, which Coote describes in her own terms. Why translate what Coote has written into these terms? One reason is that it helps me, as a student, to follow and understand what Coote is doing; it provides me with points of reference, a means of analysing what is happening. Also it helps me to realise that many art therapists, and no doubt, other therapists, are practising what I understand as Processwork, without the need for this terminology, and I find that quite humbling. But I also hope that some knowledge of the theory of Processwork might possibly enrich the practice of those unfamiliar with it, that it may have something to add.

\* [www.empowersme.com](http://www.empowersme.com)

### ***Suggestion***

If you do not have an image of your own to work with, another way of entering the *dreaming process* is to randomly select a Tarot card, limiting yourself at first to the Major Arcana, as a means of looking at an aspect of yourself that you may need to grow into – that is, as yet, over your edge. Mindell writes that 'dreaming alone does not always succeed [in getting over the edge] because it is done in an altered state. Consciously visualizing is a better way to do it' (1992:47). As with dream figures, the

next step is to imagine yourself taking on some of the qualities that the image represents, possibly even stepping into that figure, acting it out and embodying it.

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## ‘It’s a Tree’

### ***Record of a therapy session combining Art Therapy and Processwork***

The piece of work pictured here was made at an Open Studio session in a mental health facility. Both the image and details of the session are used with the client’s permission.

Open Studio is a drop-in studio, facilitated by an art therapist, where participants come and go as they please, within the allotted time, and may or may not choose to engage with the art therapist.

Prior to completion of the art piece, she and I had not discussed her personal circumstances. She then said, “It’s a tree – like the moving trees in [the film] *The Lord of the Rings*”. She proceeded to talk about her love of nature and her dog, which her husband takes for walks, as she was “agoraphobic”, not leaving the house

for many years; she had spent the previous three months in her darkened bedroom, prior to being hospitalised.

In Processwork terms, in describing the tree, she is in the *Visual Channel (primary process)*, but the *Kinaesthetic Channel* is also in evidence as part of her *secondary process*, as it is a moving tree – and the tree itself is *secondary*, although she may be partially identified with it as representing that *primary* part of her that loves nature.

However, her *primary process* position is that she is “agoraphobic” and her husband (*Relationship Channel*) is the one who is out in nature walking the dog, as is the dog, with which she also has an important relationship. So both husband and dog are *secondary* for her as representing something that she cannot do, i.e. that is *over her Edge*.

This is expressed through speech (*auditory channel*) but also in describing her husband out with the dog, she is in the *visual channel* in her imagination, and I found I was also in the *visual channel*, picturing the scene in my own mind’s eye.

While she is still there, I say to her, “You know, I hear that you are agoraphobic [acknowledging her *primary process*], but I also hear you [joining her in the *auditory channel*, in which she has presented me with the above information] expressing such delight in talking about your husband out in nature walking with your dog, that it seems to me that you’d like to be there too”.

After a brief, reflective moment, she said, “You’re right. The penny’s just dropped”. She then went on to say what a fool she’d been, but rather than dwell on the negative, I picked up her positive statement reflecting new insight. As the room we were in was roofed with glass, I asked her what it was like to look at the expanse of

the sky outside. I was testing to see to whether her Edge to going outside was still in place, or to what extent. When she was evidently comfortable with looking outside, I asked her, “Would you consider going outside?” and she replied very firmly, “Oh, I am going outside”. She led the way outside, having given me permission to come with her, and proceeded to touch flowers, leaves, branches, and was practically dancing around them (perhaps like her moving tree?) when I left her there, to go and pack up her art piece. She came back inside to retrieve her art piece. However, the following morning I happened upon her sitting by an open door reading, and she told me that she had already been outside that day.

We see here how respectfully exploring the Edge with the client, and allowing her to stay at the Edge as long as she needs to, can lead to her stepping over that Edge in her own time – which, when the client feels supported, can be quite quickly. By stepping over the Edge into the unknown – but where the unknown has begun to be explored and no longer seems (so?) scary or forbidding, the *secondary* begins to become *primary*. The more channels that this can be experienced in, the better the new experience – and the expansion of the primary identity that it brings with it – can be integrated.

In this case, the secondary process initially appeared in the *visual* and *relationship channels* – in her imagining her husband out in nature with her dog. Talking about it brought it into the *auditory channel*. In her reflecting on the new idea that it could be her out there, her eyes were downcast, indicating that her attention was turned inwards, but it is also likely that she was *feeling* something quite strongly in relation to this new information – echoed in her statements, “The penny’s dropped” and “I’ve been such a fool” – thus *proprioception/the proprioceptive channel*. Next I brought her back to the *visual channel* to try and find out if she was actually ready to go

outside. She gave very positive feedback to that avenue of exploration: “I am going outside”; she then *moved* in that direction (*Kinaesthetic channel*) and I suggest that in her experience in the garden, the proprioceptive as well as the visual and kinaesthetic channels were involved – and the auditory channel, as we talked a little about it, reinforcing the experience. Later she would tell her husband, bringing it into the relationship channel, and as she accessed the wider world in a new way, the *world channel* was also involved.

In the context of Art Therapy, I suggested that she might use the art piece as a reminder – perhaps by placing it in her bedroom, lest she should find herself tempted to retreat from the outside world again. She responded positively to this and it was clear that the art piece was meaningful for her. In that sense, I felt I brought it full circle by beginning and ending with the art piece, but using a Process-Oriented approach to help her unfold the message contained within it.

As I watched her make the artwork, it reminded me of a tower and the curling brown paper of hair. As she spoke of her own confinement within the walls of her own home, I could not help thinking of the story of Rapunzel locked in the tower. I mentioned this to her after she had told me about the tree. She barely acknowledged it, showing only lukewarm interest, which I took as *negative feedback*, in Processwork terms. *Positive feedback* in Processwork is when you get a very energetic response, be that positive or negative: if there’s energy in it, that’s where the interest lies.

One of the things that drew me to art therapy was seeing Julie Aldridge work in this way when facilitating a group at Art Therapy Summer School (Cork, July 2010). As we viewed our artwork together, she might throw in a comment, and if it got a

response, she went with it, and it took life. If not, she dropped it. This reminded me of seeing Processwork in action. I find it a very respectful way of working, showing sensitivity and real listening skill.

Helen Wells, Process Worker and art therapist working in the UK, pointed out to me that the movement channel was there right from the start, when the client mentioned the moving trees. Of the dreaming level of the trees, Wells wrote (personal communication via email, 19 January 2014), 'They stopped having endless discussions, uprooted themselves and moved out to face the dangers. So the signal is also there as a dream door and then you help her bring it up into everyday reality and go outside. Her dance in the garden is an expression of Ent dreaming' (Ent is the name given to the trees in *Lord of the Rings*).

I was not aware of the 'endless discussions' and the Ents' decision to take action, not having read the book, only having seen the movie; as far as I can tell, this was also the case with the client, who referred to the movie rather than the book. But it fits with what I know of her process, in that years of being unable to leave her house were followed by a sudden decision to go outside, followed by immediate action to that effect. Once that decision was made, her fears dissolved.

## Rank, Power and Boundary Issues

*'I now understand there are no immutable borders to this work*

*I do, only boundaries that bind together at the same time*

*they make distinct.'*

C.H. Moon: ***Studio Art Therapy***, p.274

There is general awareness throughout contemporary Western culture, and in the ethics of psychotherapy in particular, of differentials in power that exist according to a person's ethnicity, gender, age, social class/background, sexual orientation, etc. and there are legal sanctions in place in case of abuses of power. This is reflected in the art therapy literature (Balloqui:2005:135; Lewin 1990:12;Wood 1998:31-32).

One of the Processwork concepts I have found most helpful, in relation to this - not just in therapy but in human relations generally - is the concept of *rank*. Wood (1998:31) states as a common view 'that there is always an imbalance of power in therapeutic relationships, with the client invariably being in the weaker position', although she also notes (p.32):'Men may be taken more seriously than women, older people may command more respect than younger people, those who are white may be listened to more willingly than people who are seen as "non-white". The match between the age, gender and background of the therapist will influence the type of relationship that is formed'. She adds, 'This does not mean that difference is an obstacle to therapy, it could in fact be beneficial'.

In its approach to what it calls *rank*, Processwork suggests a more nuanced view, taking account not only of social rank, as alluded to above, but *contextual*, *psychological* and *spiritual* rank. See Appendix 1: Rank, for detail.

This allows us to become aware of our own rank in different situations; it also helps to expand our observational skills in therapeutic and other relational settings. It can assist us in bringing compassion to both ourselves and others in the moment, as we realise how the power differential can change from moment to moment within the duration of a session. This is in line with Mindell's concept of the *field* and of *dreaming up*, where roles can move momentarily from person to person. This does not negate the therapist's role to maintain awareness and overall responsibility; but it does allow for a more realistic acceptance of transference/countertransference issues and for realities such as how, say, a younger, female and perhaps dark-skinned therapist may feel, at least initially, in the presence of a client who is older, male, white and in a more prominent position in society. It is up to her to hold the awareness - awareness around rank in general and her own rank in particular. Her own awareness of her own rank, especially her contextual, psychological and spiritual rank, may help her with this.

As Mindell said (Bodian 1990), 'I have to be aware of the whole process, because I'm part of the process too'. In the same interview, he also said, 'The most important thing in working with people is the skill with which you use the other skills, what I call the metaskill. This is the feeling or attitude you have about yourself and others. If you have a compassionate attitude, that in itself generates what you do'.

## ***Touch as a Boundary Issue***

Physical contact is often used in Processwork, with the client's permission, as a means of meeting the client and his/her needs. Under their Ethical Standards 1.07, it states: 'Process Work recognizes the therapeutic value of touch, and may include various forms of bodywork involving physical contact. Physical contact is used only with the client's consent. The appropriate use of physical contact depends on a number of considerations, including the client's history and/or background and/or morality and/or mental state and/or diagnosis and/or condition and/or culture'. For instance, if the client is "struggling" metaphorically, s/he may be encouraged to physically struggle with the facilitating Process Worker; I have seen on numerous occasions how this may call forth a person's underlying strength, and bring them, through embodiment, to discover and believe in their own power. See, for example, Mindell 1985 112-118; Mindell A. & A. 1992: 104-109 and 144-150.

When I came to study art therapy, touch was initially communicated to me as being out of bounds. I found this very difficult to come to terms with at first, but am particularly grateful to Catherine Phillips of the Art Therapy Department in CIT, for expanding my concept of "touch" in relation to clients. She taught me how one may touch the other via eye contact or gesture by, say, offering a paper hankie. I also learned from Sinéad Moloney, Dramatherapist, while on placement with her, how props or peripherals (e.g. fingertips, elbows) may be used.

In the final year of the art therapy masters training, Ed Kuczaj, Head of the Art Therapy Department, led a discussion on boundaries in the light of our experience working with clients on placement over the previous two years. He also shared some of his own experience and some of the literature I cite below. The discussion did not

explicitly deal with the issue of touch, but it did make explicit that boundaries should be decided according to the client's best interests, rather than some rigid dogma, while keeping the parameters clear.

The IACAT Code of Ethics and Practice (Appendix C: Touch Policy) makes it clear that we need to take into account 'levels of physical and cognitive ability, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and history of abuse or political torture' and there is explicit reference to Children First Guidelines (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011), which are due to become law (The Children First Bill 2014), and the Department of Education and Skills' rules concerning touch (2011?), as well as the rules of the institution in which one is working.

The IACAT Touch Policy is primarily directed towards Dramatherapists and Dance Movement Therapists and I am grateful for its inclusion, particularly the last paragraph, which states: 'Most importantly, the client's permission to engage in physical contact during the therapeutic relationship is paramount and must be an issue of ongoing consensual decision-making between service users and therapist'. This reflects Processwork's position also.

Wolff (1977:18) contends that (in the context of psychotherapy), 'Occasionally, physical contact like touching or holding a patient or asking him to breathe more deeply or to carry out active body movements (Lowen,1975) may assist in helping him become more aware of his physical and emotional needs'. Rowan (2012:6) quotes Lawry (1998:205) as saying that, 'it does appear that there are times when touch can provide unique therapeutic communications, such as "You are touchable", "Touch can feel safe and nurturing" or "You can say no or yes to touch". These communications are particularly important to a survivor of sexual trauma'.

According to Wood (1998:35), 'The mechanisms which link bodily/psychological experience and art making are of great interest and need further exploration, particularly when it preserves a holistic view of an individual'. She believes that: 'Something of this unity can however be glimpsed in artwork produced in therapy' (ibid:34). She also refers to neurocognitive research. I find myself linking this to Elbrecht & Antcliff's findings re neuroscientific research and the use of clay (see Chapter Three, p.85) and 'Being Touched through Touch' (2014:19). Drawing on their experience and my own with clay, I ask myself if offering clay, a bit like the use of props in Drama Therapy, might offer an alternative to physical touch by the art therapist. It may even have advantages in being "impersonal", in that the user may be able to project into the clay in a purer, clearer way than they would onto the therapist? In some cases, this might equally be disadvantageous; but it is, I suggest, an option which art therapists might consider, particularly if they or their client is not comfortable with touch or touch is otherwise inappropriate.

If, as Mindell says, (1985:45) 'Becoming yourself can be understood as knowing your dreambody, becoming whole or round, developing your full experience through awareness of each of your different channels', then it is important to be able to explore those channels through channel-switching. When this happens, it is helpful to be able to join the person in the channel they are in. Rowan again (ibid): 'In Chapter 2 of her classic book *The Therapeutic Relationship* (2003), Petruska Clarkson warns against a trend towards "defensive psychotherapy" where therapists may be overcautious to avoid any physical contact even where it is indicated'.

Rowan too points out that 'therapists of different orientations have the same regard for the importance of boundaries, but interpret the precise point of them differently'

(ibid:12), but there seems to be general agreement that '[p]robably the most important boundary issue is confidentiality' (ibid:3). He differentiates (p.17) between 'boundary maintenance' which 'is all about holding fast to strict boundaries specified in the particular type of therapy being offered'; and 'boundary awareness' which 'is more about keeping a sense of boundaries, ... even when they are being varied or modified because of the needs of this particular client'. He favours boundary awareness. Zur (2004:1) makes a similar distinction between 'harmful boundary violations, beneficial boundary crossings and unavoidable or helpful dual relationships'.

I will leave the last word with art therapist, Cathy Moon, who talks of 'boundary markers' and says of them, 'They are there as my guides. It's up to me to decide when they serve as a containing sanctuary and when they are an invitation to break through and explore new territory' (2002:18).

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## A Note on the Use of Hypotheses in Processwork

During our training in Processwork in the late 1990s, we were encouraged to have not one but many hypotheses - as many hypotheses as possible, in fact - in relation to what was happening with the client, in order to keep an open mind and not jump to conclusions.

One day, Kate Jobe folded her arms across her chest and asked us what this movement could mean. At first we came up with the kind of things you read about in books on body language that claim that gestures have specific meanings, such as that folded arms mean you're "defensive"; then things such as, "You could be standing your ground"; "You could be angry or stern"; "You could be hugging yourself – with joy – or comforting yourself". I think I came up with, "You could be cold", as I know it's something I do when I'm cold. Kate herself said, "My bra strap could be undone". That's all I can remember or think of right now!

But the lesson stuck with me, and even if I can't always imagine very widely, it does remind me not to make assumptions, and to allow for things I had never thought of. In particular, it helps me to *not* interpret people's images in art therapy, which is why I pass it on.

'Hypotheses and questions are formed, discarded, reformed, and elaborated based on the client's feedback' (Diamond and Spark Jones 2004).

### *Reference*

Diamond, J. & Spark Jones, L. (2004) *A Path Made by Walking, Process Work in Practice*. Portland, OR.: Lao Tse Press.

## Conclusions

The aim of this study, on *Merging Practices: Process-Oriented Thinking and Practice as applied to Art Therapy*, was to explore the possibility that Process Oriented Psychology, or Processwork, might prove of interest to art therapists as a way of working with clients therapeutically.

In my own case, of working on myself and recording my experiences – a heuristic study – Processwork has proved more than adequate to the task. Given that this came about of necessity, rather than being my first choice of approach, it has been a bonus – and indeed a very pleasurable voyage of self-discovery – to find my own process coinciding with that of this thesis, and to sense that the Tao was with me – or I with it. It has enriched my experience, and my potential to experience my process through my artwork. This equally applies to the case study presented in Chapter Five, which takes a phenomenological approach; Processwork provided a very flexible way to follow this client's process and stay with the process.

Art-based research, the use of images, both mine and the client's, makes the evidence concrete, visible, tangible, accessible. The artwork is part of, and also evidence of, the process; it is not illustration of the process, nor is it the process in its totality. This is true whether we call it art therapy or Processwork or both.

As a way of introducing Processwork to art therapists, and helping them to see its potential for use in art therapy, Chapter Two, **Linking Processwork and Art Therapy through the Terminology of Process Oriented Psychology**, has turned out to be particularly persuasive. I was surprised at the many links or potential links I

was able to find between thinking that was already happening in art therapy and the thinking behind Processwork.

The most challenging aspect to putting Processwork theory into practice in art therapy may relate to the potential for touch to be used. This may create a dilemma for some, even many, art therapists. I don't believe this is insurmountable, as demonstrated in Chapter Six on **Rank, Power and Boundary Issues**; even where touch is out of bounds, art therapists may well find creative alternatives.

Though this was not the main purpose of the study, art therapists who are curious about Processwork, whether or not they wish to use it with clients, may find it worthwhile to use it as a way of working on themselves. To practise on oneself is a good way of learning about Processwork anyway. Some of the examples given in the thesis and some of the **Recommended Reading to start with (Appendix 2)** may help with this.

As for myself, I will continue to explore Processwork as a way of working on myself and with others.



*Card by Fiona McAuley*

**(14,586 words)**

## Appendix 1

# Rank

Rank is earned and unearned.

**Unearned rank** comes from the situation you were born into, like being supported by parents, the country you were born in, the economic situation, and so on.

**Earned rank** comes from things you have worked for: education, professional or personal accomplishments.

Rank is related to power.

There are different kinds of rank:

- **Social Rank** – Some rank is based on socially recognized sources, like ethnicity, skin colour, gender, religion, sexual orientation, economic status, nationality, education and so on.
- **Contextual Rank** – This is rank related to a person's standing in an organization or family. For instance, the rank you feel in your job may be different from the rank you feel in your family; a woman in a women's group may have higher rank there than she does in mainstream society. Coming from a particular culture gives you rank: you know people, you can understand their signals and how the culture works. If you move to a different place, you may well lose that contextual rank.
- **Psychological Rank** – Another kind of rank comes from having gone through different kinds of personal struggles. Having gone through life's struggles gives a kind of rank that is earned through surviving them. An aspect of

personal rank can also be comfort with a wide range of emotions – the ability to cry, be hurt, be angry, be glad, to take the other person’s side even if you’re hurt (flexibility). This sort of rank and spiritual rank are not situational. They tend to travel with the person wherever s/he goes.

- **Spiritual Rank** – involves a sense of being connected to something greater, such as God/Goddess or the spirit. This connection can be dearer than life itself. This gives a kind of power and access to inner resources. Spiritual rank can provide a sense of detachment from day to day problems or relationship problems.

Rank is often unconscious. We are not aware of our rank or the effects of it when we have it. We need others to help us know about our rank, especially rank that is not social rank. When we are not aware of and able to use our rank, we are in danger of abusing it.

### **Signals of higher rank**

1. Determining how available you are to relate: time, place, duration.
2. Determining communication style. High rank has a tendency to be cool and rational and to expect others to be the same.
3. When relationship issues arise, you think it is the other’s problem. You can’t understand. The other is crazy, disturbed, too angry, too emotional, too sensitive.
4. Tone is detached, objective, patronizing, condescending.
5. Sense of superiority, smugness, self-confidence, self-esteem.
6. Being able to look people in the eye.
7. Ability to initiate conversation.
8. Posture tends to be erect.

9. Not much fidgeting.

### **Signals of lower rank**

1. Tendency to say “yes” with double signals that say “no”, such as looking away, turning away, clenching and tightening.
2. You tend to feel paranoid, like you are crazy.
3. You have a tendency to take things internally.
4. Low self-esteem, feelings of inferiority
5. Tendency to be emotional, upset, angry, feel misunderstood.

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This Appendix is based on notes for students at a Processwork Seminar on Relationships in June 1997 in Ireland given by Processwork Trainers Jan Dworkin and Robert King, combined with notes which appeared in Kate Jobe’s blog on her website <http://katejobe.com/2014/worldwork-2014/> on April 29, 2014.

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## Appendix 2

# Recommended Reading to start with

*If you want just one book as a 'beginner's guide', probably the most useful one is:*

Diamond, J., Spark Jones, L. (2004) *A Path Made by Walking: Processwork in Practice*. Portland, OR.: Lao Tse Press.

*It is particularly good on how to work with signals; it suggests ways of working with visual signals that may be new even to art therapists.*

*I favoured the next two because they were already familiar to me - and I like reading Mindell in his own words! Both were published in the same year and I used them in tandem throughout the thesis.*

Mindell, A. (1985) *River's Way, The Process Science of the Dreambody*. London and Boston, Mass.: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Mindell, A. (1985) *Working with the Dreaming Body*. London and New York: Penguin Arkana. Reprinted 2002 by Lao Tse Press, Portland, OR.

*Working with the Dreaming Body contains a chapter on 'Working alone on yourself'. If you want to know more about this – and it's a good place to start, particularly if you have no other opportunity to access Processwork – Mindell has a whole book on the subject:*

Mindell, A. (1990) *Working on Yourself Alone, Inner Dreambody Work*. London and New York: Penguin Arkana. Reprinted (2000) by Lao Tse Press, Portland, OR.

*This book also contains client artwork. The book reminds me a little of Jungian Robert A. Johnson's Inner Work, Using Dreams and Active Imagination for Personal Growth (1989, New York: HarperCollins). If you like one, you might like the other!*

*To get a good idea of Processwork in action (including illustrations):*

Mindell, A. & A. (1992) *Riding the Horse Backwards, Process Work in Theory and Practice*. London and New York: Penguin Arkana. Republished by Lao Tse Press, Portland, OR. (2001) as *Riding the Horse Backwards: Process Work in Theory and Practice (Foundation series)*.

*Working with the Dreaming Body (cited above) also has a chapter entitled 'Dreambodywork Verbatim'.*

*Both are useful for getting a sense of what Processwork is like experientially.*

*Of more direct relevance to art therapists, whether for oneself or potentially for use with clients, is Amy Mindell's book:*

Mindell, A. (2005) *The Dreaming Source of Creativity, 30 Creative and Magical Ways to Work on Yourself*. Portland, OR.: Lao Tse Press.

*I also heartily recommend to all art therapists and artists who would like to apply a Process-oriented approach to their art: Art and Dreaming, A lecture by Jan Dworkin, PhD., presented at a Joseph Mann Painting Intensive, Portland, Oregon, 2003.*

Available from: [http://www.jandworkin.com/jans\\_articles.htm](http://www.jandworkin.com/jans_articles.htm) [Joseph Mann-web.pdf](#)

*For further reading, try this web link:*

[www.aamindell.net/category/publications/books/arnold-mindell-books/](http://www.aamindell.net/category/publications/books/arnold-mindell-books/)

*It lists all the Mindells' books and has links to Lao Tse Press, Processwork's own publication house, as well as other related publishers. It also lists articles, videos, etc., and is regularly updated.*