

Hidden Lives: Hidden Gems

The
Book of
Conversations



From one of us,
on behalf of all of us

Working Group

Hidden Lives: Hidden Gems is an independent group, co-created by Gilly Angell (NCCH/LENS, UCLH arts committee), Dr Christina Lovey (creative practitioner, independent academic), Sofia Rasini (founder Associazione Campo Base, Italy), Melissa Fry (founder Engage Here) and Laure Mourgue d'Algue (Masters in Interdisciplinary Life Sciences, Learning Planet Institute). Our intention is to start an interdisciplinary conversation for those interested in evaluatory practises within creative health. We formed in June 2021 following the Creative Lives Conference at University College London. This symposium aims to be the first of a series of conversations aiming to transform current research paradigms.

Part

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Timeline of Events

June 2021, University College London

Creative Lives Conference

From the 2–3 June 2021, University College London, hosted a two-day virtual conference exploring creative approaches to health, the life course, community, and well-being. At this, Gilly introduced the importance of creating new paradigms around how we gather research data in the arts and health, and invited anybody interested to help in getting a symposium running. A padlet was created and some initial ideas were collected.

July 2021

Recruiting the Working Group

Throughout the following weeks, interested participants got in touch with Gilly. The `hiddenliveshiddengems` email was created.

October 2021, Canonbury, London

Steering Meetings

A first meeting was organised where ideas and expectations were discussed around tea and coffee. A second meeting was held to come up with an agreed on definition of “lived experience”. A whatsapp group was generated for convenience. It was agreed a recording of the process of research could be collected as a “conversation book”.

November 2021, Canonbury, London

Writing the Call and Visual Identity

The working group met again to write up a call, and agree on participants’ profile to whom to reach out. Melissa presented different options for the groups’ visual identity. It was decided to keep the symposium UK based.

November 2021, The Strand, London

Pre-Call Meeting

The timetable and dates for the event was discussed. The call was finalised and laid out by Melissa.

December 2021

Call Out

The call was sent out with a submission deadline of Jan 6th.

January 2022, The Old Arts Diorama, London

Symposium Planning

The Old Arts Diorama agreed to host the symposium, while the working group met there to explore the space and discuss how the symposium would roll out.

January 2022

Submission Reviews

Submissions were surveyed and discussed by the team. Choice of inclusion was made by the end of January.

February – March 2022, Canonbury, London and Online

Participant Encounter

Experts and practitioners who met the symposium's aim were contacted and a first call was made to clarify queries.

March – May 2022, Canonbury, London and Online

Finalising the Organisation

Multiple meetings were organised to agree on a final symposium schedule. Practicalities were sorted out (food, facilitation etc.). Final programme was sent out for print.

May 2022, The Old Arts Diorama, London

International Symposium

The symposium was hosted May 12th and 13th.

March – October 2022, Online

The Book of Conversations

The working group set up the ground work to write up The Book of Conversations. Following the symposium, an email was sent out to collect: an evaluation of the workshop hosted, an evaluation of the symposium/reflections, references, further readings, other thoughts/writing and any relevant pictures. A collective padlet was set out. Participants' contributions were collected and collated. Design and its evolution were discussed at multiple meetings. The book was sent out to print mid-October.

Introduction

The seeds of the symposium were planted years ago, as I hovered between life and death, surrounded by a wall of three hundred pictures, cards and photos sent by family and friends to express words thy could not find and love.

Over the next eighteen months this museum of love was reassembled each time I moved rooms. Talking points with staff, family and friends.

I hear that it is against Trust Policy for patients to put art on their walls. Why?

In the intervening years I know the display and engagement with my art wall supported me during my complex illness and recovery.

Life meanders on and by now I am involved in committees who speak about the benefits of art and well-being, how to capture the data and the cost effectiveness of such interventions.

I sit and listen, realizing that both those with lived experience and practitioners are not included in these "discussions" and our rich and varied experiences of creative health are not being captured by the academics and policy makers.

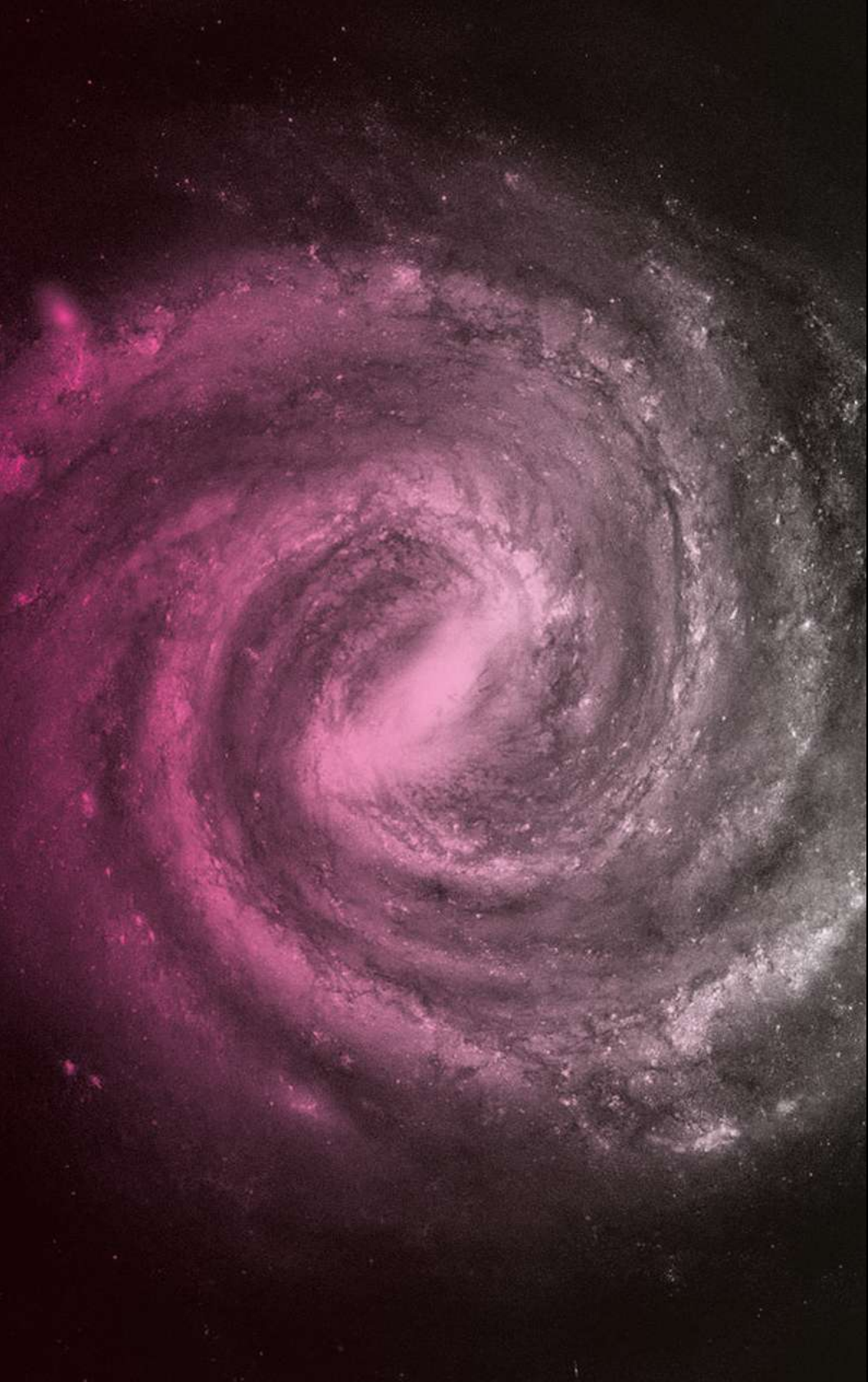
So ... a group of creative and dynamic women come together to develop and co-create a symposium to show that creativity can be evaluated in different ways by showing that the subject and non-tangible experiences of those with lived experience are meaningful and can be captured as first hand, in the moment, engagement with what is perceived and felt as individual reality.

Dance when you are broken open
Dance if you have torn your bandage off
Dance in the middle of fighting
Dance in your blood
Dance when you are perfectly free

The Essential Rumi Translation, Coleman Barks with John Moyne, 1996
Harper San Francisco, p. 281.

symposium
noun

- 1 a a convivial party (as after a banquet in ancient Greece) with music and conversation
b a social gathering at which there is free interchange of ideas
- 2 a a formal meeting at which several specialists deliver short addresses on a topic or on related topics
b a collection of opinions on a subject *especially*: one published by a periodical
c discussion



'Lived Experience' is first hand,
in the moment engagement
with what is perceived and felt
as individual reality.

Part



II

International Symposium Programme

Day 1

10.15-10.35

**Creative Paradigm
with Dr Christina Lovey**

10.35-11.00

The Labyrinth with Gilly Angell

11.10-11.35

Storytelling with Dr Lorna Collins

11.40-12.05

**Feedback in Form of Haiku
with Dr Linda Miller**

13.30-13.55

**Facilitation Exploration of Creativity
through Collage with Elizabeth Muncey**

14.00-14.25

**Challenging the "Don't Ask – Don't Tell"
Culture About Art Therapists with
Lived Experience of Mental Health
with Dr Val Huet**

15.00-15.25

**Pharmacy Health Services
with Dr Ranjita Dhital and
Professor Jacqueline Sin**

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Day 2

10.20-10.45

**The Parataxis Form
with Dr Christina Lovey**

10.50-11.15

**Hidden Meanings; the Non-Visual
Language of Touch with Katy Dymoke**

11.35-11.45

Introducing The Book of Conversations

11.45-14.00

Expressive Language with Melissa Fry

15.00-15.30

Visual Evaluation

Day 1

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10.00



10.00

Meet and Greet

All twelve of participants met on Thursday morning, some travelling from afar (over the Channel), some travelling from closer, on the ground floor of the Old Diorama Arts Centre, (ODAC) in Central London. Since the 1970s, the ODAC has supported London's creative ecology, defining itself as a creation centre, a shared home for the live arts, creative industries and local community to make, explore and meet. Tea, coffee and biscuits were provided, participants were welcomed in. Hidden Lives: Hidden Gems is incredibly grateful to Daniel Pitt for welcoming us over these incredible blastful two days.

Creative Paradigm

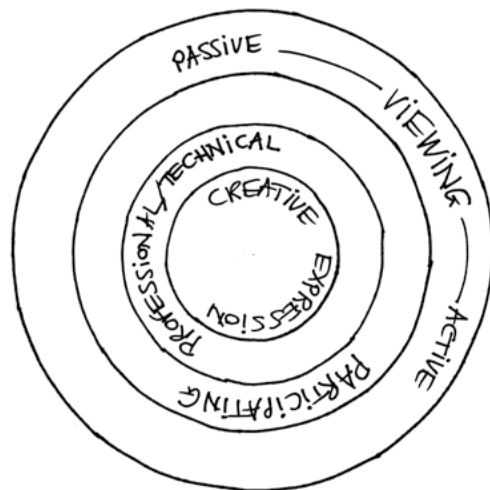
Dr Christina Lovey

How might a Creativity Paradigm help us to better understand what creative practice is? I first started thinking about this in 2017. I was listening to someone from the Arts Council try to explain what creativity is: they seemed vague and unconvincing, using the word Netflix as if it was a cultural phenomenon. I then observed other organisations similarly struggling to articulate the notion of creativity in relation to health and well-being. Something was needed to explain the varying modes of engagement we all have with creativity and creative expression. There is a big difference between watching an actor on Netflix and being an actor performing professionally – but how could I make this clear?

The idea of using a paradigm to explain varying modes of engagement came to me in a flash – I have a neurodivergent brain and as such, thinking does not happen in a linear, logical way. I sketched out a diagram to help me understand what it was I was thinking. Sometimes, images are louder than words.

To use an example, I imagined the journey of a dancer whose first experience of dance was passively watching. The dance forms she is exposed to as a viewer will inform her knowledge about different forms and she may watch many different forms before becoming interested in learning how to tap dance, for example. This is the first circle of the paradigm – that of viewing.

Creativity Paradigm © Christina Lovey, 2022



This circle has two modes: passive and active. We can watch something actively, meaning that our mirror neurons are excited and we experience the dance differently, or we can watch passively, enjoying the dance and its aesthetics.

The next circle is that of participating – an activity that may be formal, as in lessons, or informal, as in workshops and joining in. Participating in arts activities is generally rewarding but in the example of the tap dancer, participating is most definitely about learning: learning the form, the structure, the how to of the dance. The tap dancer may stay here in this circle, happily participating and developing skills and knowledge. Or they may proceed to the next level of the paradigm: the professional or technical level.

This circle is about working as a professional dancer and becoming perceived as an expert in the form. Dancers who reach this level may perform in dance companies and share their technical proficiency with an audience: the viewers of the first circle. Or they may share their knowledge and skill through teaching or running workshops, providing opportunities for others to participate. However, it is most likely the case that they are not creating anything unique themselves; rather they are performing the works of choreographers and other creators.

The inner circle of the paradigm is creative expression. This is the bull's eye. Here, the dancer is creating something unique and expressing themselves through creativity. They may share this expression with others through performing or choreographing, or they may simply find enjoyment and satisfaction in the act of creating, using a form with confidence and mastery.

During the presentation of this paradigm at the symposium, there was discussion about how the levels may not need to run concurrently. Working with participants using the tap dance form, I am always inspired by the way creative expression comes to the fore through improvisation. Other creative practitioners have similar stories to tell about participants creating something unique and satisfying without reaching a professional or technical level. However, it is important for those policy makers and institutions leading the agenda on creative health activities, there is some awareness of the process whereby creativity happens. It is only through such an awareness we move forward and instigate positive creative experiences for everyone.



- 1 A coin from Knossos, home of the 'original' labyrinth. The pastoral crook and the Yin Yang symbol can both be found amongst its windings. — Tetradrachm, Knossos, 1st millennium Bc, British Museum, London
- 2 The Hopi Indians call the labyrinth the 'Mother Earth' symbol, and liken it to their own underground sanctuaries, the Kivas. It was from here that the Hopi emerged from the pre-ceding world. 'All the lines and passages within the maze form the universal plan of the Creator, which man must follow on his Road of Life.' — Drawing by Oswald White Bear Fredericks, © 1963, *The Book of the Hopi*, Frank Waters, 1969, Viking Press, New York.
- 3 Labyrinth of large pebbles found in 1838 by Dr von Baer, on the uninhabited Island of Wier, Finland.
- 4 Labyrinth scratched on a painted pillar 2000 years ago, in the house of Lucretius, with the observation: Labyrinthus, hic habitat Minotaurus. — Pompeii, before av 79

The Labyrinth

Gilly Angell

The spiral is the first source of human creativity, mandalic movements of dance which pre-dates the labyrinth which in turn embodies the spiral and is the external manifestation of the spirals that make up our internal bodies which in turn is manifest in nature and the cosmos and is at once the cosmos and the individual, the subject and object – this is the duality by which all is known. The distance between subject and object is knowledge. Within the Kabbalistic Tree of Knowledge it is known as 'Eheieh asher Ehieh: I Am [subject] that I Am [Object]. This the mirror of consciousness by which pure Being looks at itself. In the Islamic tradition it is said "I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known, so I created the world." It is the cosmos breathing. With the exhalation the spirit contracts, creates and involves into matter; with the inhalation, matter expands and evolves into spirit. Both concepts implicit in the labyrinth in the three stages – entering, reflecting, integration of knowledge.

The earliest spirals rock engravings are palaeolithic and the earliest known labyrinths date from the nineteenth century BC in Egypt. In classical times the labyrinth was central to the creation of the city. The ritual imitated the original cosmic creation – becoming a liminal space from the surrounding chaos and therefore sanctified.

The labyrinth creates and dissolves, expands and contracts reveals and conceals allowing us to move from the intellect into the world of creative spirit.

I will give you the end of the golden string
 Only wind it into a ball
 It will lead you in at Heaven's Gate
 Built in Jerusalem's wall

Jerusalem, William Blake, 1808

11.00

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11.10

Storytelling

Dr Lorna Collins

I came to the International Symposium with a sketchy plan to stimulate a collaborative performance, which would be enacted by participants in an unforeseen manner. Facing the prospect of a wall of silence, it was risky – I had no idea whether or how participants would respond. The main aim was to build a narrative, telling the stories of our hidden lives (personally and in this collective gathering) and to find hidden gems, in the process.

I started the story with the iconic words: “Once upon a time”, inviting someone else in the room to finish the sentence. Everyone said their own sentence, building new characters and events. In a manner similar to the Surrealist game of Exquisite Corpse, we invented a piecemeal tale. We had so much fun. Our story went anywhere and everywhere. It was hilarious. This moment celebrated both our radical difference and our mutual connectedness. The performance became magical and historical, as we found bright, shining gems in our own limitless imaginations.

To tell and retell stories is an ancient rite. A few years ago, I worked with the Adivasis, the indigenous Indians across Chhattisgarh, in South-East India. They have a terrible plight – becoming faceless, spaceless, demonised in society. Their land, homes, lives, futures are destroyed by mining. There are no human rights, no public voice, no private space. The Adivasis respond to their terrible situation by telling stories, passing these down from generation to generation. Their stories survive as archaeological artefacts, commemorating and changing the present, creating a new present, for a new future.

The story we created at the symposium enables us to find and crystallise the gems, no longer hidden, of our imagination. The life of the conference crystallised here, in this book, is no longer hidden.

Opposite, This is Dinesh





11.40–12.05

Feedback in Form of Haiku

Dr Linda Miller

The Haiku workshop began with an introduction explaining the interdisciplinarity of the work, medical education, medical humanities, positive psychology coaching, creative, visual, and performing arts collaborations, and facilitation. The theoretical basis for creative evaluation, from the literature was discussed:

- 1 Creativity in modes of data collection and analysis
- 2 Creativity in the process of evaluation.

The postcard evaluation exercise was introduced with the origins of the fascination with metaphor. Metaphorical thinking enables processing of complex ideas. Examples of the use of postcards with postgraduate students learning to be supervisors, to evaluate their experience of a ten-week course, were used to create psychological safety within this group of Hidden Gems participants, demonstrating the interpretation of the postcards meaning for the individual. The rich nature of the insights enabled the group to look at the postcards on the floor and to think metaphorically. The instruction, to just pick what you are drawn to, not to think analytically about which one to choose, is important to the process. There should not be compulsion to share, but gentle invitation to share thinking if so inclined. The facilitator should restrain themselves from interpreting, as in the best coaching, just listening, affirming, and echoing the words of the participant, if needed. In this group prompts were not needed, but if they are, a 'clean language'¹ approach should be used, avoiding a sense of transaction or that the meaning is needed by the facilitator.

Using the previous storytelling session as material for the evaluation process, participants chose postcards relevant to them. The themes further emerge when the discussion is captured in collaborative poetry. This idea (another creative evaluation process used by the facilitator for research) prompted by a

¹ *Clean Language Revealing Metaphors and Opening Minds*, Wendy Sullivan and Julie Rees, 2008, Carmarthen, Crown

participant's curiosity about how such a rich metaphor could be captured, for the future. Collaborative poetry is a form of thematic analysis.

There is curiosity about the coincidences, serendipity, subconscious attraction to things that resonate with the past, crystals, hospice, Freud's 'uncanny'. Positional and journey metaphors emerged, being 'out' and 'away', moving back into the woods, and daring, venturing forth to skate, or travel, being 'transported', 'lead 'to other 'unexpected places 'another culture', 'another country' or times past (childhood) or future 'That kind of finding through time' 'in a year or two'. Metaphors of space and containment were also present 'get around it' and 'accommodate'.

The evaluation identifies the value for each of the different participants, each expressed through their chosen metaphorical frame, but also areas of future awareness for any facilitator of storytelling sessions. The risk for the facilitator in not knowing what people might say, (skating on thin ice perilous but thrilling) the emergent nature of it, but also the risk for those more hesitant, needing to translate, those with 'different vocabularies', tentative at the edge of the clearing, it needs to be permissible to be 'passive participants' to observe. The very real need to create psychological safety, permission to say anything, is clear. The lime highlights the 'zestiness' which needs to be tempered and balanced with yoghurt and sweet raisins. Perhaps the fear of having creative methods dismissed as not just 'unconventional' but 'unbalanced', perilous in its potential for being discredited, discreditable at risk of falling or tasting toxic, the bittersweet risk of play. Not black and white, like the matador, but a colourful palette which may or may not be palatable to convention. Risky business a dance to the death, the bullfight.

There was relevance of the storytelling exercise to participants own research ethics and the reflexivity of the researcher. The importance of the voice of a researcher not overshadowing the voices of research participants was considered, 'your place or mine', restraint, knowing our place.

Restraining our lived experience in order to not interpret, but to honour the research participants 'lenses and filters' and to allow their unique metaphors to emerge, through clean language rather than interpretation. In parallel this is the same challenge for the postcard evaluation facilitator.

The Postcard/Haiku workshop concluded with the introduction of Haiku as a form of evaluation with examples from evaluation of my online pandemic lockdown workshops for doctors and sharing of mini metaphors, tangible objects, which can also be used to prompt metaphorical reflection. Examples of mini metaphor use from undergraduate medical student teaching were shared. For those interested in metaphor *Metaphors We Live By* by Lakoff and Johnson 2 was recommended. Tuning in to others metaphorical frames is also an adjunct to communication skills and can help to increase rapport. *Illness as Metaphor* by Susan Sontag is a further introduction to how illness is perceived metaphorically and how this may not always be helpful.

Below is a selection of Haiku's generated by the participants at the symposium:

I have one
The deer in Richmond Park
In the woods

I struggled so at first, I think
Thinking I was drawn to the Egg
Actually, for a while

So, I chose this one
Which is the Klimt
The study of the dancer in 1916/17

An hour or so for the first time
It's so freeing in a way
So, it can lead you

Lenses and filters
Inviting the stories
Letting the voices be heard

It went off and was drawn back together
And It was a moving thing
Moving in both senses of the word

12.05

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13.30

Facilitation Exploration of Creativity Through Collage

Elizabeth Muncey

Here is a brief selection of my thoughts about the experience of participating in the symposium. I am currently enrolled at UCL on an inter-disciplinary M.A.S.c. in Creative Health, I have an undergraduate degree in Psychology and Counselling. It would be fair to say I have a passion for facilitating Communication, especially in divergent thinking. The opportunity to practically explore creative research methods was and is irresistible.

At this stage of my life, I know a lot of things from reading and I know a lot of things by experience. The research I am interested in is at the intersect of perception, memory, identity and behaviours. I am hoping to apply this in the field of health, possibly public health. Here is one diagram I am finding useful to explain the concept of health literacy, the author points out it is from the perspective of the United States.

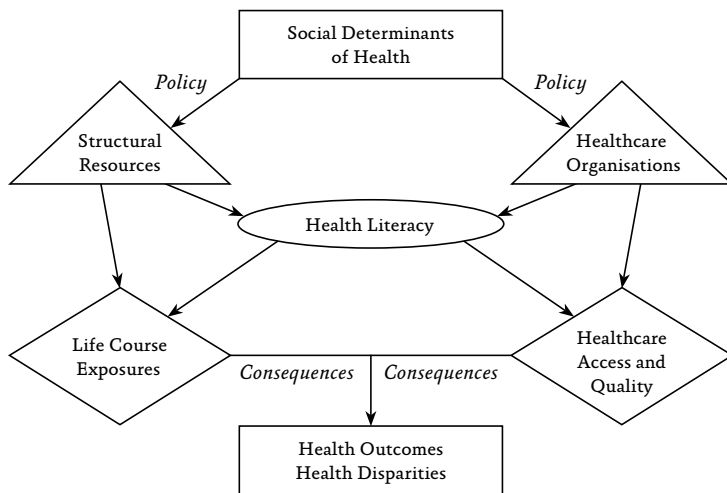
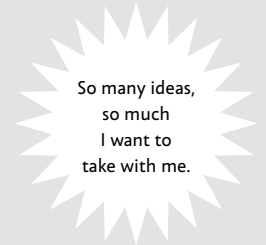


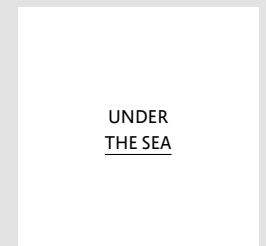
Fig. 1
A Conceptual framework for the pathways that connect social determinants of health, health literacy, and health disparities. Pathways on the right represent health care pathways, those on the left represent public health pathways.
— Dean Schillinger, 2021:e237

A graphic visualisation of the thoughts and feelings expressed by participants in response to the question “How do I think/feel now?”, asked at the beginning of the workshop.

WONDERMENT
A bouncing plateau
bit tired but full ...
ready for lift off.
EXCITED ABOUT NEPAL



LACKING SPACE
Tired, and excited, too many thoughts.
Maybe scared to let myself exist, a bit breathless, decompressing but happy.
REMEMBERING I CAN





What might be a useful way of collecting data from a diverse group of people? How might an atmosphere of trust and collaboration be facilitated? Is art a universal language or a universal activity? I thought it might be productive to consider a cross-cultural and cross-discipline method of providing a source of materials and a 'narrative'. Three-dimensional collage is my preferred method for exploring complex concepts like memory consolidation; personal and organisational meaning makings; and broader societal values. You can view some of the day's outputs on the next pages. Creativity is not always comfortable at the time, as Csikszentmihalyi has pointed out in his work on flow states. Maybe it is the knowledge that it might involve emotional turmoil that makes people wary when creativity is mentioned.

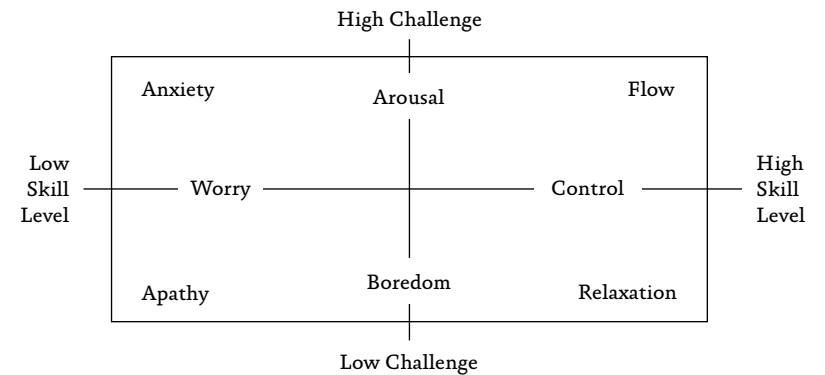
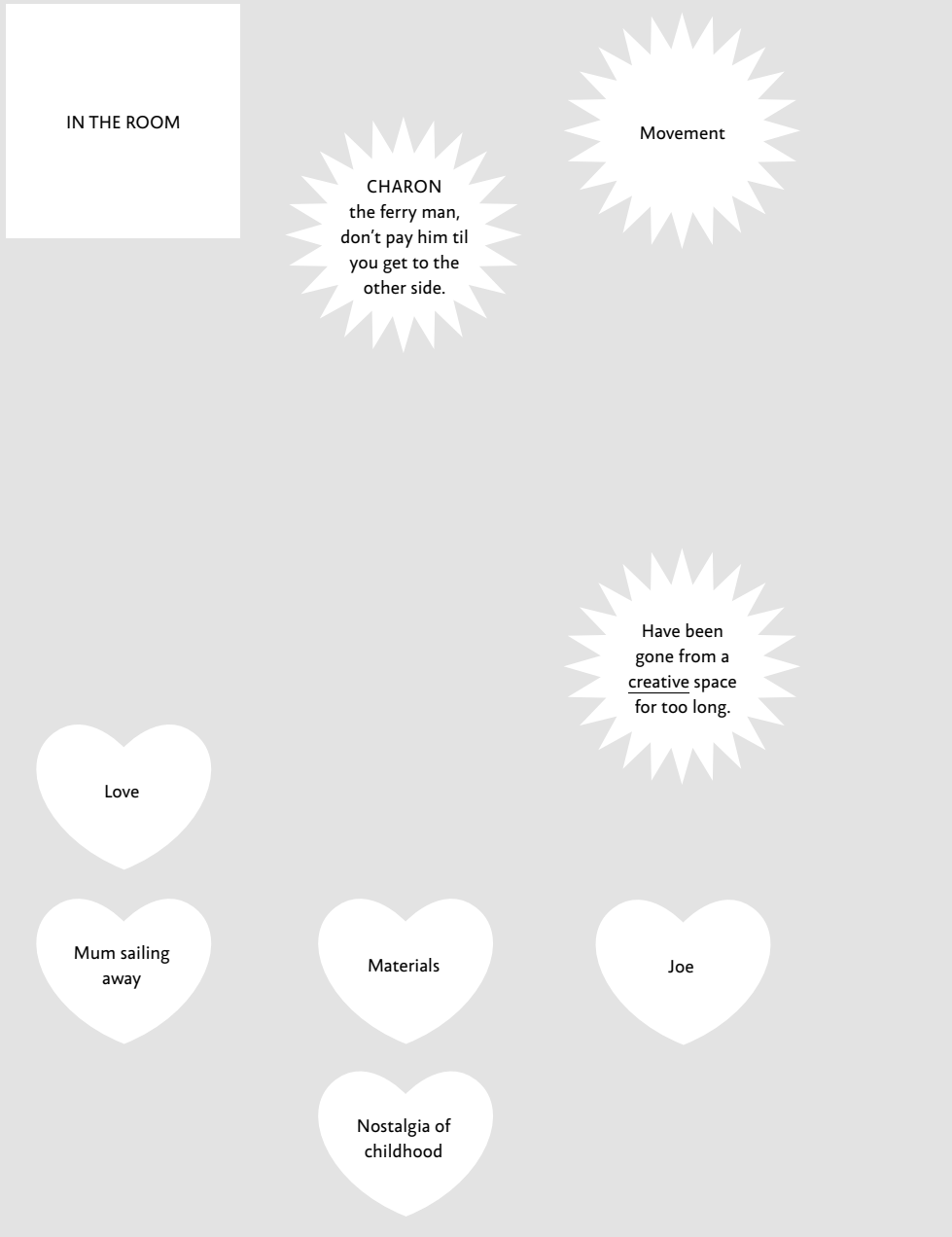


Fig. 2
Mental state in terms of challenge level and skill level
— Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 1997:31

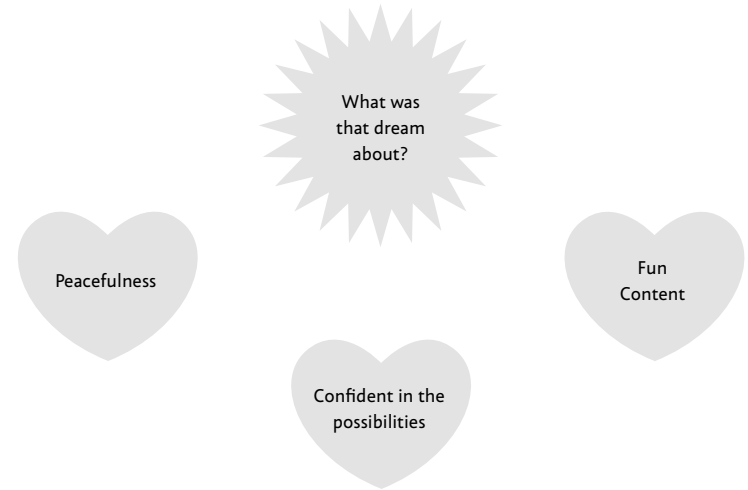
I used the 'River of Life' analogy for its fluidity in my workshop. It feels like a universal metaphor, visceral beyond words. Some of the disparities in applying social determinants of health to England, where I am studying, are due to the highly stratified nature of bureaucracy. Creativity is not about re-arranging elements to make more useful products, it is about collaboration and team work to address suffering.

Constructing a vessel to travel down the river is analogous to constructing an identity to function in a community. Having a taste for nautical metaphor, I would also like to add 'proceed with caution'. Human factors research seems to have been quiet



Another visualisation, again documenting the thoughts and feelings of the participants, in response to the question "How do I think/feel right now?", but this time at the end of the workshop.

A final visualisation, in response to the question "How do I think/feel today", disconnecting the focus of the questioning from the workshop, but more in the perspective of the week generally.



lately but maybe I am reading the wrong Journals. There are inevitable tensions when there is a narrative of scarcity. The notion of taking materials and forming them into a solution for a problem seems counter-intuitive to all the great inventions, discovered while looking for something else.

Did I mention it's complicated? All these terminologies require operational definitions, see the further reading at the end of this piece. I would like to wish you luck in your explorations, remember luck is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration.

Further reading:

- 1 *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, Basic Books, New York.
- 2 *Situation Awareness: Proceed with Caution. Human Factors: The Journal of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society*, John Flach, 1995, available from: doi.org, 37 (1), pp. 149-157.
- 3 *Passages: Rafting the Green River as an Analogy to the Mid-Life*, Isenhardt, Myra W., 1983, Transition. ERIC database, non journal, available from: eric.edu.gov.
- 4 *Scarcity: The True Cost Of Not Having Enough*, Eldar Shafir and Sendhil Mullainatha, 2014, Penguin Books, London.
- 5 *Social Determinants, Health Literacy; and Disparities: Intersections and Controversies*, Dean Schillinger, 2021, HLRP: Health Literacy Research and Practice, Available from doi.org, 5 (3), e233-e243.



14.00–14.25

Challenging the “Don’t Ask – Don’t Tell” Culture About Art Therapists with Lived Experience of Mental Health

Val Huet was unable to send feedback on the event, but the working group agreed it would be a shame not to record some of the insights shared. Val’s talk focused on introducing the insight she gained from founding a Special Interest Group for Art Therapists with Dual Experience in 2014, following the move in 2010 by which service users can now actively participate and present at the British Association of Art Therapists conferences. Challenging the “don’t ask, don’t tell” culture is not easy – yet the question “what do I say about my mental health at interviews” is recurrent. Whilst it is key to protect the professional body the therapists make up (there should be no obligation to disclose one’s mental health), addressing false beliefs such as that, “as a therapist, you are fine”, is also key. A study published in 2016 by Val¹ explores the implications for art therapy training and practice that art therapists with experience of mental distress have. Generating paradigms within which we can be one of many things, is crucial, not just for practitioners, but also for patients, because the discipline can blossom and grow from reciprocal learning. This talk echoed with the symposium participants, some who mentioned that doctors were – for example often wounded healers.

¹ DOI:10.1080/17454832.2016.1219755

14.30



14.50

Pharmacy Health Services

Dr Ranjita Dhital and Professor Jacqueline Sin

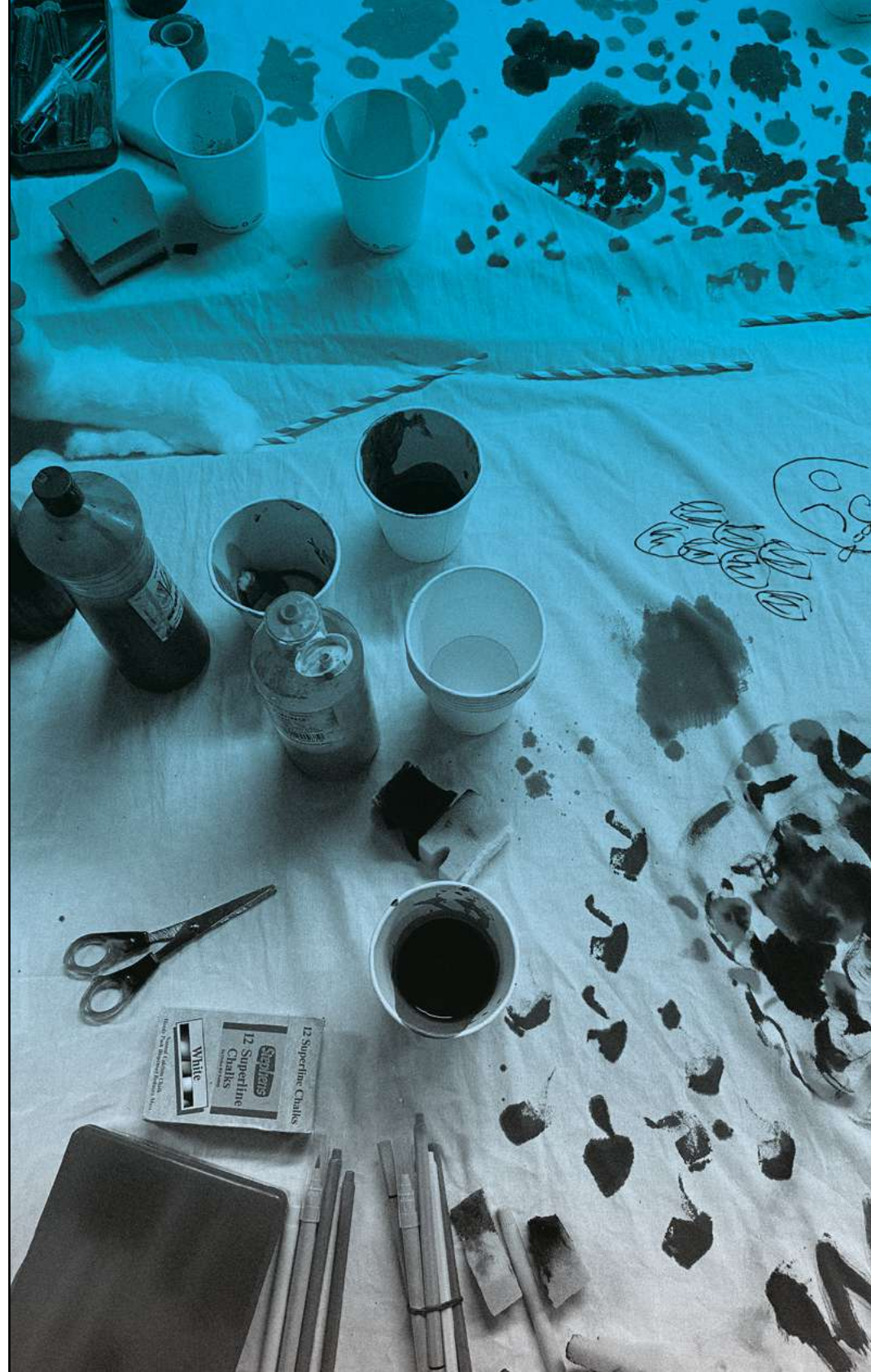
I'm leading a study, using creative research methods to examine how pharmacy staff and patients experience the pharmacy environment and how these spaces could be optimised by co-producing a Pharmacy Design Guide (Pharmacy Research UK Leverhulme Fellowship, 2018). This work included a recent systematic review published with our collaborators to identify studies examining how pharmacy spaces affect individuals (Dhital et al, 2022). We were surprised to find there were only a few studies that explored the effects of the physical and social aspects of pharmacy spaces.

To effectively develop pharmacy services, the experiences of the pharmacy environment need to be urgently and meaningfully understood, especially how these spaces could be affecting patients' engagement with their health, possible effects on health outcomes and implications for future pharmacy practice.

The symposium workshop provided a creative space to explore these ideas. A white fabric was placed on a large table and participants were encouraged to express both positive and negative experiences through mark-making and by adding objects to the fabric. During this activity, people recalled their experiences of pharmacy spaces and individuals also moved around the table observing what was being created. For most this was the first time they had expressed in this way how community pharmacy spaces made them feel.

Some individuals were emotional, especially through recalling pharmacy visits where privacy wasn't considered, they did not feel comfortable, and weren't able to engage in meaningful conversation with pharmacy staff. Participants also expressed how the space and management of health services could be improved through better person-centred care, adding colour, better lighting, and having plants to make it a more welcoming environment.

After 30-minutes "a canvas of community pharmacy experiences" was co-created. I was surprised to see the rich range of expressions during this short exercise.





There were periods of silence mixed with chatter while focussing on the task. I felt the creative activity evoked memories and experiences which hadn't been explored before. I wondered how non-creative practitioners would engage with a similar task, which I'll be doing later for the Architecture of Pharmacy research study. This experience highlighted for me the value of creative practice to produce a safe space to understand the "hidden lives within community pharmacy".

15.30



Day 2

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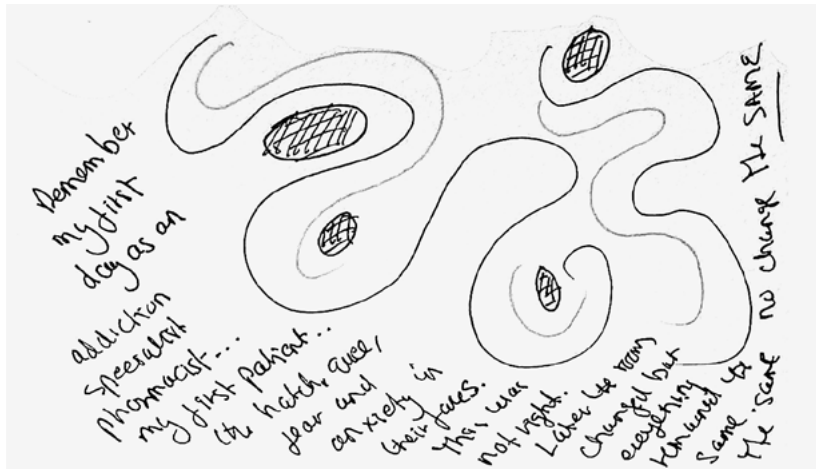
10.20

The Parataxis Form

Dr Christina Lovey

The day has been long already but I am ready to go – to talk – to be present. The mood is warm in the room. It will be OK. I can introduce this and set it in some place where it can be received and understood – I start talking. I introduce Ranciere, Robert Antelme and Blaise Cendrars and explain. I explain that using this form of writing enabled me to say things I could not otherwise say. Stories of loss and grief. Of trauma. Everyday things like death. Everyday things like life. Reflexivity. Liminality. Lived experience. I read. I read from a text I wrote about working with the dying, the bereaved. The memories of that time are vivid. Re-reading brings them to the fore. But they are safely contained here in this form; this writing holds them on the page before me – even as I speak them out loud, they are held. Held in the air that surrounds us.

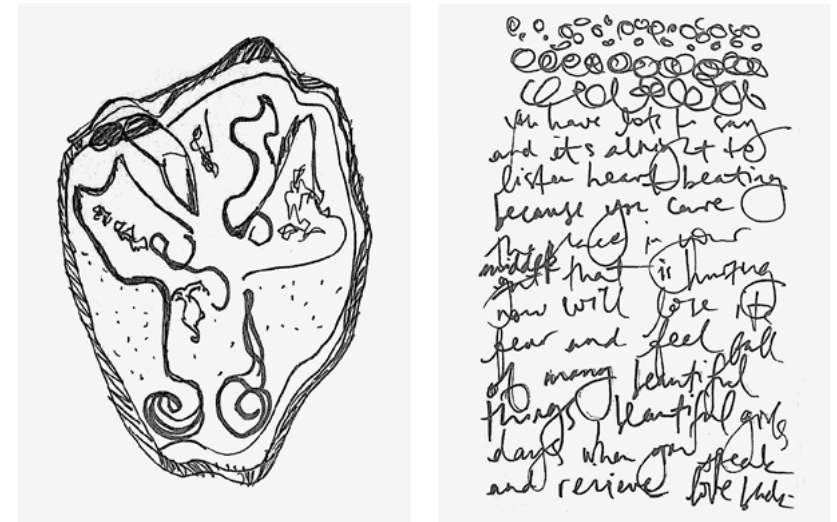
I pause when I reach the end. The words are paused in the air. I ask everyone to reflect on how this form might be used to express something they find difficult to express. An encounter. A memory. A feeling. Sensations. What ways can this form of writing capture a moment in time. I ask. I instruct. I wait. I see people in



“Remember my first day as an addiction specialist pharmacist ... my first patient the hatch, queue, fear and anxiety in their faces. That was not right. Later the room changed but everything remained the same. The same. No change the same.”

the room thinking. I see them writing. It is quiet. It is still. Words are waiting to be spoken out loud. Stories are waiting to be told.

I ask everyone to share something of what they have written. And they do. I anticipate. Am I asking too much – have I explained



Right, “You have lots to say and its alright to listen heart beating because you care the middle place in your gut that is hurting now will lose its fear and feel fall of many beautiful things, beautiful girls days when you speak and receive love back.”

it clearly – they might not get it – but they do. Everyone shares something. Everyone has something important to say. The words spill into the quiet air. They hover around us as we all listen, carefully, intently, calmly. There is much to tell and much to learn. We have been told. We have listened. We have heard. The above text is written using the parataxic form. (Ranciere: The Sentence Image and the Great Parataxic).

Below are examples of forms from workshop participants:

- 1 'I watch as my body dissolves into a thousand layers.'
- 2 '... the wait is unbearable for the mentally distressed: the hollow shell, the bright lights, noisy, unreceptive space.'
- 3 'We sit, and we start – its time to talk – seven voices. We pick cards. I share everything I have on my mind – the guilt, the responsibility and the fear.'



10.50–11.15

Hidden Meanings; the Non-Visual Language of Touch

Katy Dymoke

As I entered, the session was in process, the atmosphere attentive and calm, collected and attuned to something in common. My experience of the 'mind of the room' was spacious and permeable to subjectivity, to difference, to individual responses—hence I felt receptive and received at the same time. I sense the 'membrane' in such spaces—the idea that ideas are born from a process, an experience that inspires us, so our 'hidden' or veiled perceptions can permeate, resonate and crystallise or dissipate with ease. Very creative, co-creative, and playful, genuine curiosity, interest and experiential, and a time for introspection and sharing—for dialogue—so the gems could sparkle, radiate and weave into a continuum ...

The sense of time—a meeting of self as ideas surface from memory—I recall creating a butterfly from straws and paper, tape and placing it in the 'pond' standing high as if hovering over it.

Recall, the butterfly's beauty, fragility.
Arise, the soul taking flight, my father's spirit.
Return, here in the garden where he used to sit.
Flutter, the light rhythm vibrates the air, breathless.
Hover, leaf like presence rides the eddies and air waves.
Floating, on the wind streams against a deep blue sky.
Landing, in silence so I hear your soul singing.
Crystal, hidden gems of animate life reform.

The frame of the screen printing was a clear metaphor—from a given structure, there is then space for choice, for colour, variation, variability, for the unification of self in the moment of creating. The illusion becomes substance, a reality in material form, the paper marked and layered with imprints, on-printed from the mind—to become something more than it appears.

The capturing of sense in words—and shapes, assembled on a large sheet of paper on the wall—this resonates even more as I reflect on it. The symbol of choice making, of autonomy,

of having a voice that can disappear in time but lasts longer in material form and adds to a collective consciousness when placed amongst others. The intention was not to reduce to a theory but to represent the collective – and see the commonalities therein – again the membrane surfaces for me as a metaphor that enables the mind to remain motile rather than the need to fix a summative phrase or reduction that may then stifle the potential to continue – rigidifying the creative mind.

In the relatively short time I felt I offered a few 'gems' that are key to my creative outputs and philosophy, the imperative to bring touch back into the world and reclaim it as a fundamental sense to relate to self/other and create relationships based on trust and ease. The circle at the start worked as a metaphor for the group, facing in, seeing each other – then turning to face out is a transition which affects each person differently. Some feel protective of the inner space, some feel vulnerability that the circle may break as someone could change it without them seeing.

The transition back to facing in re-established the sense of coherence and containment. Each transition to a different formation changed the identity of the group as with the following: The invitation for every-other person to step into the centre, facing in, created an inner circle changed the 'mind' of the group. The outer circle then faces out, and the energy changed again. The inner circle then faces out to join the outer circle – and this gave a sense of facing the outside world together, then the outside circle faced in to face the inner circle and the energy changed again.

This movement metaphor is relational and part of a group process – a levelling down of any hierarchy and a levelling up of the sense of equality, a sense of community evolving from the purposeful formation of a circle and the human perception of attention to within or without, a sense of group intention. Receptivity was explored.

The transition into movement in the space was to introduce exploring the sense of touch, tactility and the impact on self – the association with memory, with being able to receive and feel, noticing emotional responses. We then did an exchange in twos.

We explored neutral touch on ourselves – the idea of listening to the information we get as we touch our own body first. Then as we touched our partner the two-way flow of sensory information in and movement responses out as we altered the quality of the touch or pressure – indicated the rich variations in touch quality possible and the ability to adjust to ensure the partner touched is at ease. The touched partner was actively engaged and directive of their partner, indicating to remove the hand or to relocate it to a place that seems to beckon it. The idea of touching without intending to change anything was a simple way to notice the wealth of information that touch provides us and the choices we have to change pressure, weight/density, texture, temperature, movement, etc.

I felt touched by the considered responses and feedback comments, one in particular who noticed an associated memory surface as she was exploring the space, which moved her emotionally. I felt the truth of touch as a sense that connects us deeply to our sense of self, often taking us back to early memory as touch was the key perceptive sense in infancy. Then touch also enables us to attend to hidden or early experiences, unresolved splits or conflicts, in a bodily way. Some responded the following day as to the meaningful nature of the explorations and how the value was still resonating.

11.15

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11.35

Expressive Language

Melissa Fry

Each stage of the screen printing process opens up a plethora of new creative possibilities. Even before any printing has taken place, setting up a mini studio in the Old Diorama immediately contributed to an air of unusualness.

Screen printing relies on stencils. 'Stencil'; comes from the medieval word 'stanselen' – to decorate with bright colours', while in old French, 'estencele' – means to sparkle. Both definitions were fitting for the printing gem motifs.

Screen printing is considered a repeatable process, making it perfect for editions. Repetition can be hugely therapeutic and can therefore be a sensory way of experiencing imagery.

Though the repeatable aspect was undoubtedly part of our process, the analogue nature our printing setup in fact meant we were mono-printing. Despite the apparent consistency of our movements and stencils that we were working from, each print was actually unique. For every person and attempt, there was infinite possible outcomes. There are no mistakes and it is important to recognise that everyone's experiences and understandings of the process are different.

In case you're not familiar with the process of screen printing, a screen is a frame, sometimes made of wood but often made of metal, which is traditionally covered with a fine silk, that is now mostly synthetic. A stencil, made from hardened emulsion, is exposed and embedded into the mesh. On some parts of the screen the mesh is blocked by the emulsion and at other parts the mesh is open.

The screen is placed onto a flat surface, on top of paper or fabric, and ink is squeezed through the mesh using squeegee, revealing the design below. This process can be repeated over number of times, in different colours and treatments.

Of course, the process can and does go wrong, and embracing the concept of failure, if there is such a thing, is truly valuable, and part of excitement of screen printing.



12.00

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13.30

Lunch



15.30



Part



III



Reflections

Laure Mourgue d'Algue

Reflecting on the symposium is an interesting experience: a little stupidly I must confess, I didn't go through my notes after the symposium, and now I am. I wonder: will the words I wrote back then still make sense? Have I "lost" that lived experience? Or have I been sufficiently equipped by the techniques participants shared to recall how I felt, what I learnt. Often in life I feel like I go through cycles of learning, forgetting, re-learning. Often I wonder, how much time and opportunities do we "lose" from despising "lived experience", not considering it a serious "data"? In "This Can't be Happening", George Montbiot argues that to some extent forgetfulness is protective short-term when coping with climate change. Yet our inability to recall small incremental changes is, perhaps, also pushing us into a tragically difficult position. The field of climate psychology probably has something to say about that. Experts in trauma must also have some information to disclose – what do we make of past lived experience?

One of my pastimes is writing, and yet I often find myself thinking – everything has already been written, what "new" experience might I bring in, may I even dare say "I am writing a novel?". I think of a quote I once encountered "Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live enough to make them all yourself". Often these make me cringe, but it feels like there's some truth to that – I'd like to explore these themes – learning and transmission – how do we become better humans in every generation? The symposium for me was an invitation to that. This was a transgenerational, multiprofessional and cultural conversation. This was also the recognition of our individual sovereignty and agency – of the hidden gem in each of our lives, which is too often silenced. It was a real life put-in-action of Audre Lorde's essay "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action". From that day, I remember the joy and contentment I felt from listening, and being heard – a shared understanding of the potential world we want to build.

As time has moved on, and me with it, I forgot these learnings. Yet re-reading my notes and sitting down with past

thoughts – staring back at postcards, looking back from emails, brought back memories and thoughts I had ever had. Since then, I have practised adopting Gilly's labyrinth again: instead of drawing it on the ground, I use the tip of my fingers to carve it out on the surface of my hand. The physicality of that touch reminds me to be present, and immediately takes me back to the space we created together. When so much of what goes wrong in the world seems to be owed to miscommunication, at least in the policy space, maybe it's time to try to speak a little differently? Many of the things we experimented with during the symposium had the appearance of simplicity, yet, they were, for both group and the collective, incredibly rich and enabling. The question is not: why would we not try? Shifting paradigms, taking a step aside, is an invitation to consider the narratives and metaphors we decide to live by, and in this leap towards vulnerability, we become infinitely more present.

Sofia Rasini

Following the symposium, participants were asked to come back to Hidden Lives: Hidden Gems with an evaluation of the workshop they hosted and observations of the event. The responses reflect the variety of professional expertise and lived experience of the facilitators. Here we re encounter the group's thoughts on the potential of movement, touch, ritual, and metaphor to enable independent illness narratives to form and foster patient autonomy.

A central theme of the contributions is enthusiasm generated by the opportunity to practice and assess creative health practices in a collaborative setting. Several discuss the value of distilling larger concepts in a group that is built on trust and co-creation, to compose inclusive outcomes that take into consideration a complexity of expression more fully revealed when practitioners approach healthcare with an interdisciplinary lens. With the workshop reflections, we are led back through the intentions of the symposium; beginning with a definition of creative engagement, through personal indicators of well-being, to non-verbal or non-standardised modes of evaluation.

Also surfacing are the ways in which the healthcare practitioners, researchers, art therapists, public health experts, and experts by experience that were a part of the first Hidden Lives:

Hidden Gems symposium feel that artistic process may expand their own professional practice, and infiltrate national and international policy-making places.

With the visual and narrative outcomes of the symposium, I am made aware of aspects of creative practice and healthcare that come naturally to both and address the same needs. The singular focus of the artist and academic, the sustained negotiations of the patient and performer, and the construction of meaning in both art and medicine, for example. Perhaps we can continue to meet at the intersection of these disciplines where we are challenged to listen to non-words, to create whilst we evaluate, and to use our bodies and thoughts to address the healing of other bodies and thoughts until we can one day consider healthcare a creative field.



Colophon

The Book of Conversations

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This is the start of a conversation ...

1 What might research paradigms look like if they are considered through the lens of experience?

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2 What is the nature of listening and attentive modes of dissemination?

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3 What impact will this creative paradigm have on policy making and design in the UK and beyond?

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4 What will your contribution to this discussion be?

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