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# Points on my Curve to Find: A Journey around the Self to Find the World

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University of Plymouth

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Points on my Curve to Find:  
A Journey around the Self to Find the World

**MORGAINE GAYE**

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

|                        |
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| Year 1                 |
| Thesis                 |

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**Practice Documentation:**

CD1: Series I - Slide show of 1<sup>st</sup> series of drawings

CD2: Series II - Images of second series of paintings

CD3: Visual Sketchbook – A selection of photographs, drawings and sketches from all notebooks.

CD4: Moving documentation – Moving images and music sketchbook, documented on page 116.

Word count: 42,884

## SYNOPSIS

*All statements we make are inevitably pictures or images*<sup>1</sup>

My creative practice has undergone a chronological series of transformations that has entailed experiments in several modes of self-expression. This has included the writing of prose-text, lyrics, song-writing, musical performance as a vocalist, work in film-making and visual documentation and work as a visual artist. In a life that has so far spanned living for substantial periods in different countries and cultures, my creative practice has been strongly influenced by that international and inter-cultural existence.

Whilst on the one hand, different cultures nevertheless manifest 'languages' of communality with each other (especially in non-verbal communication, global 'signs, signals' and 'symbols'), on the other hand, there are distinctive and specific cultural patterns (and arts outcomes) that serve to delineate differences between one culture and another. My research and practice has been equally divided between a study of both commonalities and 'difference'.

Consequently, the two series of works that have been submitted move regularly between dealing with particular and specific focus on forms and ideas embodied in the art-works of several cultures (particularly the first series), and forms and ideas resulting from a kind of introspective and reflective condition of art-making. From the outset of my research, I was concerned with an 'arts/science' set of paradigms- a practice that engaged with and between scientific method and contemporary arts practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Plato (1974) *Timeaus and Critias*, Penguin, London. p.127

At some point(s), my research took the form of film-maker, Flamenco student; tourist; overseas worker (Namibia), song-writer and lyricist, but none of these modes ultimately formed the nucleus of my outcomes. The visual works submitted are intended to reflect the inter-cultural and cross-disciplinary modality of my practice. But they are also, a 'chronicle' of 'a life'; in this particular case, my own.

The written thesis fluxes between reflective study and analysis and a critical evaluation of the sources, influences and techniques embodied by all works in the two series. Naturally, there is always an element of 'travelogue' about both the practical work and the written documentation. But there is also an intentional discourse on and about sources of inspiration and the affect those sources have on form, content and technique in my work as a visual artist.

## INTRODUCTION

### Departures

*Much travel is needed before the raw man is ripened.*<sup>2</sup>

This thesis began within me, long before I began *it*. Readings and teachings through all my academic studies and experiences I had encountered, became fragmented concepts and personal notions of existence and meaning, some of which having been relocated here through a variety of mediums. Piece by piece, the unfolding and exploring of that which would otherwise evade revelation, is shown as I present *self* (myself) as both subject and critic; object and explorer.

I assemble fragments of self, ideas and knowledge which entwine with the memories and associations of places I have lived and the music and images which have had an impact upon me (so much so, that I changed my life because of them or formed my world to include them). The contours of such a discourse are not always smooth and seamless, so this work and exploration is a commentary on such fragmentation by reorganization; bringing it back to the place in which it connects. Excavating the rich aspects of hybrid cultures (both personal and global) enables me to look at both the seemingly isolated traditions and arts, and also the interface between the various expressions of, and in, those societies, thoughts and bodies of knowledge and the parts which make up the whole of (my)self.

The following account is incomplete. It shows the documented process, artwork and notes about the journey from self, around self and back to self. There have been many paths and topics, some more enticing than others and some which led in a completely different direction - contrary to the final course ultimately taken. There have been surprises, discovering unfolding connections from elements of seemingly unrelated ideas. I passed from familiar territory into a new

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<sup>2</sup> Shah, Idries (1988) *Caravan of Dreams*, Octagon Press Ltd., London. p.165

perspective and re-learned what I already thought I knew. Within this methodology of acceptance and rejection I wrote thousands of words about academic discoveries I had made only to find myself back at the beginning with 'self' and the endless challenge of revealing my own place within things; re-writing notes and finding ways to expose that which still remained obscured and hidden. Although it was my intention to explore, by way of art-making, that which I was unable to name; I am aware that each manifestation only partially communicated all the aspects I intended. Sir Arthur Eddington wrote about how impossible it is to fully penetrate or understand the mental or spiritual nature of ourselves by anything other than our own intimate contact.

*...the exploration of the external world by the methods of physical science leads not to a concrete reality but to a shadow world of symbols...Feeling that there must be more behind, we return to our starting point in human consciousness – the one centre where more might become known...<sup>3</sup>*

It is therefore clear that the 'science' which I am alluding to through my own work, is that which primarily has its central aspects located in the non-physical and non-empirical and all attempts have been made to weave together the contrasting methodologies about matter, substance and self.

To name the original subjects of research gives some idea of the roots of this thesis. To then note what have become the ultimate foci allows the reader to have some background upon which to at least sense what the seeds of the thought process once were. I began with Pythagorean mathematics, platonic figures, numbers and gematria<sup>4</sup> which showed a way into the 'workings' of the universe and pointed to the sacred, touching upon the edges of quantum theories. I began to read books about architecture, measurement, number and space and this quickly led to the notions of time and existence. From a place

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<sup>3</sup> Eddington, A. (1929) *Science and the Unseen World*, Macmillan, New York. As quoted by Wilbur, Ken (2001) *Quantum Questions*, Shabhala Publications, Inc. U.S.A. p.8

<sup>4</sup> The science of numbers representing letters and therefore revealing new and hidden meaning within texts.

which was predominantly a patriarchal, linear system, I then became more aware of chaos theory and growth patterns encompassing the Fibonacci series, iteration and the visibility of such, in so many aspects of our natural world. Amongst these subjects, I made connections between the human body, the world and the universe. Upon looking more closely at the solar system, I began to see what I felt were revelatory patterns and links between space, shape, number, music and all that I had been interested in up until that point. It seemed to me that this was more than coincidence but it beckoned analysis of ancient teachings, religious (Islamic geometry) and spiritual theories which had made reference to such connection and unification. It was at this point that I went to a symposium for Ibn Arabi<sup>5</sup> at Oxford University and I witnessed some of his poems and teachings translated into Spanish and set to Flamenco music. The experience acted as a catalyst for the rest of the research. I sensed something which I could not understand at that point. I felt such a powerful response to that symposium that I went to live with a Flamenco family in Murcia and from that place I began to develop the body of research presented here. Essentially, the subjects I became more focused on were connected to both the research thus far and to my own personal interests (inseparable). To give a catalogue of those specific subjects compromises my belief that none of them exists in isolation, without the ideas which initially lead to them. But in order to give clarity to the reader I will list the main topic headings which form the patterns which connect; Flamenco (Spanish culture), Islamic Art (Bahrain), water, unity (one) and nothingness (zero). My greatest influences came from memories of the Middle East; the culture, music and art, and how these fed directly into the new discoveries I experienced with Flamenco and its geographical and political placement.

Anthony Storr noted that *words are representations of reality, not reality itself*,<sup>6</sup> and with this in mind, I intend to represent a world in which ideas and experiences are questioned, revisited and re-presented. The words following are

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<sup>5</sup> Ibn Arabi is a revered Sufi mystic who was born in Damascus but lived his life in Murcia, Spain.

<sup>6</sup> Storr, Anthony (1972) *The Dynamics of Creation*, Penguin, England. p.84



all such representations of possibilities; representations of what may be considered to be *reality*, my reality, because all I can really talk about is that which pertains to self, the internal and its reflections and manifestations into the external and what we perceive as 'other'. In addition, I also represent such ideas as a series of images in the form of drawings, paintings, moving documentation and sketch-book notations, and thus the whole body of work serves as a departure-point for a journey to question, reveal and discover the voyage around the self. The final selection of drawings and paintings were those which I felt best described the facets and essential elements of the journey thus far. I started making work by developing a series of illustrations through which the artistic practice enabled me to express, emit or more practically understand the more ephemeral, and also the complexity within the natural sciences. This is a representation or a more accurate example of how the seeming chaos of thoughts, experiences and the mind (my mind) unfolds and associates with what may seem to be memories, distractions, knowledge or ideas. Mapping the structure of the thesis, the reader becomes a co-voyager through the multifaceted aspects of life, seen through the perspective of each art work and analysis, viewed through my lens and the marks I have made; the place to trace my intimate self, curves and points, intersections of body and soul<sup>7</sup>.

In order to give this representation a framework from which to explore the intricacies and the in-betweens, I have applied the ideas of connection, fusion and inter-dependence under each respective work, by plate and their titles. The collection of work is divided into two distinct sections which I have called *Series I* and *Series II*.

*Series I* is ink and paper art, the first body of work done to explore the initial discoveries I had about geometry, divinity and man's place within nature. This first series of drawings and art pieces are primarily ways of showing my discoveries within nature and number. They reveal my understanding of number

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<sup>7</sup> *Soul*; the place in which all wisdom and knowledge and self-beyond-self, resides.

and its generation in the universe. The interconnected array of forms, shapes and geometry, which were first re-revealed to me by Kieth Critchlow head of VITA at the Prince of Wales School of Architecture, began my acts of remembering some crucial elements which initiated the process of mark-making and writing. Through talk of platonic solids and archetypal figures, he repeated a phrase over and over again; ... *the most powerful thing in the universe is relationship*. It was this which led me to reflect upon the relationship I had with, and within, certain aspects in my life, primarily the patterns and geometry surrounding my daily life in the Middle East and the way in which I understood the forms in nature and my place within it. These memories, reflections and realisations became a series of probabilities which instantly drew me into an affinity with Kairos<sup>8</sup> and helped me to begin unlocking the dynamics of my world.

*Series II* is acrylic on canvas; a departure from the less explorative and more rule-bound *Series I*, in that, this medium seemed to allow greater formal liberation with which to develop a different style. I used the canvas more like a freedom than a restriction (which I had deliberately set up for myself in *Series I*). Therefore in the second series of paintings, a different quality emerges. The writing and analysis lessens and the apparent formal fluidity increases. The art does more of what it was supposed to do, and that is – speak for itself. The paintings are less graphic, less illustrative and more expressive. It is within *Series II* that the viewer is given much more scope for personal application of meaning and interpretation as the work develops a more mellifluous voice.

Sketches, photographs, poems, notes and drawings from my working sketch-books appear throughout the thesis as an added dimension to understanding my methods and also a way in which I suggest formal connection to the reader.<sup>9</sup> They are labeled throughout the thesis, titled *illustration*, followed by the

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<sup>8</sup> Kairos is a charity promoting the arts and poetry and wisdom of that which is thought to be timeless and essential. Kieth Critchlow is it's founder and director and every two years there is an international conference which lasts about 4 days and brings together great authors and thinkers from around the world.

<sup>9</sup> To see the unabridged version of sketches and notes please view the Visual Sketch Book CD

successive number and sometimes a brief description. Often, the drawings which are mine remain unexplained but are connected, in some way, to the text and painting preceding it. The role of 'sketches', unlike that of the formal paintings and drawings, is to give a different insight into and perspective of my methods of research and the development of ideas. The visual sketch-book was used as a means to record thoughts and also to make connections between ideas, memories and found objects, experiences and things seen. Most of the sketches are my own drawings but there are also some photographs included within the selection of images. The process of documentation is an important, but often unseen, part of the creative and analytical process. For that reason, I wanted to include a small selection of connected visual ideas/influences which shaped the making of the final pieces, in some way. The sketches are equally as important as the final works because they all have a creative value and contribute to the development of thought and creative expression/practice. They are records of an interrogative process and analysis that both preceded and prevailed during the course of completing the series.

To talk of things in order or in a linear fashion is to show a successive unfolding or hierarchical idea system. The ways in which we discover and journey, are not limited to a direct narrow path but involve a variety of feedback loops, time fragmentations, parallel journeying and dead ends. The way in which the thesis is presented is not the way in which it was originally created. Sometimes the paintings in *Series I and II* are shown in chronological succession because it seemed the most apt way to create a relationship between one subject matter and another. The topics and thoughts may follow on from one another or co-exist and interweave, going to and fro between ideas and concepts and therefore creating a more organic order. Such natural progressions are mirrored in the work. In some instances I did not intend to focus upon certain subjects but the art work and generation of new images dictated a way forward and pointed to a whole new sequence of interesting outcomes. This thesis is constructed in the form of an imposed structure, and is intended to be cyclical with each subject

part leading to a concurrent whole. ...important processes involve language which is itself superlatively circular<sup>10</sup>...

Everything is associated with patterns and numbers and I am part of this, I am an element within this. Instead of being a person in the world, I, like everyone, am a person of the world. It could be said that we each create that connecting pattern or that if we look deep enough we will find connections<sup>11</sup>. We perceive multi-layered fragments of interconnection, as we see elements of things repeating and also creating links into other subject areas and other visual ideas. The layers are those of memory, belief and science, and in some or all the parts there will be links made to the body of knowledge and memory in the viewer/reader. These subdivisions and nuances in text and image, like the material they address within the body of this work, may in part stand alone but are inextricably linked to all the other sections; they explore the inter-sensuality of the self, expressive in a variety of ways but all coming from the same source. The mind doesn't remain fully present with one subject; the mind searches for connection, identifying random associations and memory links, body memory, re-membering, emotional memories, stored thoughts and hidden feelings.

... everything is connected, and often with incredible sensitivity. Tiny perturbations won't always remain tiny.<sup>12</sup>

I am concerned with what I feel to be universal truths; my own truth and my self as the connection point, the original kernel of thought and feeling and of self. How deeply I connected to the subject matter and how it ignited a response in me, and how I have chosen to express such a response, comes back to the idea that everything is part of everything and that I am part of that. As Deepak Chopra says in many of his seminars and tapes, *I am that. You are that. This is that. And*

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<sup>10</sup> Briggs, John & Peat, F. David (1990) *Turbulent Mirror*, Perennial Library, New York. p.67

<sup>11</sup> Newtonian physics (surprisingly closer to Eastern mysticism than to Quantum physics) upheld that everything is related to everything by instantaneous action-at-a-distance.

<sup>12</sup> Waldrop, M. Mitchell (1992) *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos*, Touchstone, New York. p.66

*that is all there is.* The rhetorical question is not, where are the patterns and connections, but where *aren't* they? Our own reality and experiences build the connecting pathways all the time so that we are constantly creating patterns and connections to objects, people, nature and our own thought process and our feelings.

*I feel it with my body,  
With my blood.  
Feeling all these trees,  
All this country.  
When the wind blow,*

*You can feel it.  
Same for country ...  
You feel it.  
You can look,  
But feeling ...  
That make you.*

BIG BILL NEIDJIE  
Aboriginal Elder

Source unknown but remembered from childhood

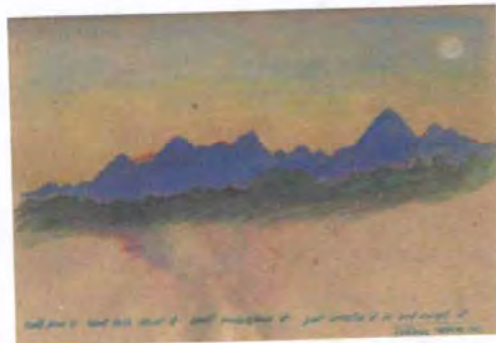


Illustration 1

## **First Series**

*Art does not produce the visible; rather, it makes visible*<sup>13</sup>.

My creative practice reflects one of impulse; a feeling arises and the most appropriate mode of expression becomes a pathway for exploring and understanding the sensation (that which is physically/ emotionally felt) or idea (that which is thought about). I have a gut feeling, for want of a better word, the sort of feeling which lets you know that you want a certain type of food or that you want to go for a walk. The desire arises in the body-mind (a visceral sensation felt in the body and also identifiable in reflection upon the sensation) and I initially get a sense somewhat similar to the feeling which tells me that I would especially like a certain type of food but in this case it is an idea of a colour and texture from which I like to begin to develop the work. For example, I may 'feel' that I need to create 'vast, dark blue and smooth', as examples of adjectives to simply convey a sensation, then with this idea I already have a notion of what I want to see on the canvas or paper. Complexity in thoughts and feelings are always a part of that process even if the result appears simple. The complexity is the mixture of memories, feelings and sometimes conflicting ideas which need to be expressed concurrently. It is often a subtle pull and struggle between analysis (based on learned ideas of art, colour, form and context) and emotion (that which is a felt-sense) but there has to be balance and I don't feel satisfied if I find the result too analytical or too emotional. The challenge is to try to allow each to surface and for me to find a way in which both feelings and ideas are present and complementary between an analytical and emotional response.

I intentionally created a series of rules and boundaries<sup>14</sup> about the visual art work as I embarked upon the journey and the process. The conventions I employed

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<sup>13</sup> Klee, Paul (1920) *Creative Credo*, published by Hershel B. Chipp (1968) *Theories of Modern Art*, Univeristy of California Press, Berkeley. p. 182

<sup>14</sup> Such rules and guidelines were as follows; all work was to be surrounded by a Golden Mean rectangle such as 5x8 or 8x13, for example. The rectangle would be doubled at least once so that colour could be

enabled me to have a clear set of guidelines within which I could get to the heart of what felt to be my understanding of geometry, Islamic art and nature. The parameters evolved from ancient art and sacred rules, those arising from the conventions of sacred geometry<sup>15</sup> and they developed in a very organic and unfolding manner. Each piece of work in the first series includes the golden mean rectangle, that which is thought to be the most beautiful by Plato, for example. The general format of the rectangle encompassing the image is from old, Persian art. Another formal aspect of Persian art was the use of bright colours and writing. On the outside of the rectangle the text was written and surrounded by a typical cloud-like shape. The colours I used were limited to those which were most often rendered in Islamic designs, those thought to be the most lovely and of course those which could be easily made in the times of pre-Christian civilisations. Although I looked to Persian art for the format (with all its own conventions and rules), I wanted to break most of the systems I set up, so the initial formal influence was just a template.

The papers I used were mostly hand made, hand torn and then sewn together (a re-assembling). The use of inks and absorbent paper always create an imperfect result, showing how all in nature is essentially perfect in its imperfections. These marks express how something can only be controlled to a point because no matter how perfect the execution and no matter how steady the hand, the uneven surfaces impede a straight, clean line. The ways in which each paper responds to the mediums is always different, and unpredictable, reflecting the essence of nature itself with such ubiquitous imperfection. I feel that no piece of art, or anything man-made or of natural structure is ever complete or flawless and such imperfection mirrored my own sense of vulnerability and shortcomings and qualities as a human being. Apart from the specific structure of the golden mean

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inserted between the lines. The border surrounding the frame of the Golden Mean would also be part of the art. I would use colours pertaining to Persian art wherever possible – blue, black, red, gold, brown. I would sew various papers together – no glue allowed, and use inks for the majority of the mark making. I would not make the paper itself square or true so that when framed the work looked like parchment or something unprepared for formal display.

<sup>15</sup> c.f. Michell, John (1988) *The Dimensions of Paradise*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London.



rectangle and other geometric measurements within that border, I wanted to leave a lot to chance (inshallah)<sup>16</sup> and found that my intentions had to be flexible as the materials often dictated the next step, the next mark to be made, and I would be guided by my immediate response to the pigments and papers. Normally I don't make preparatory sketches for a specific work, however, there are rare instances where I did make work inspired by sketches. An example of this can be seen in these two illustrations which became two of the drawings in the first series.

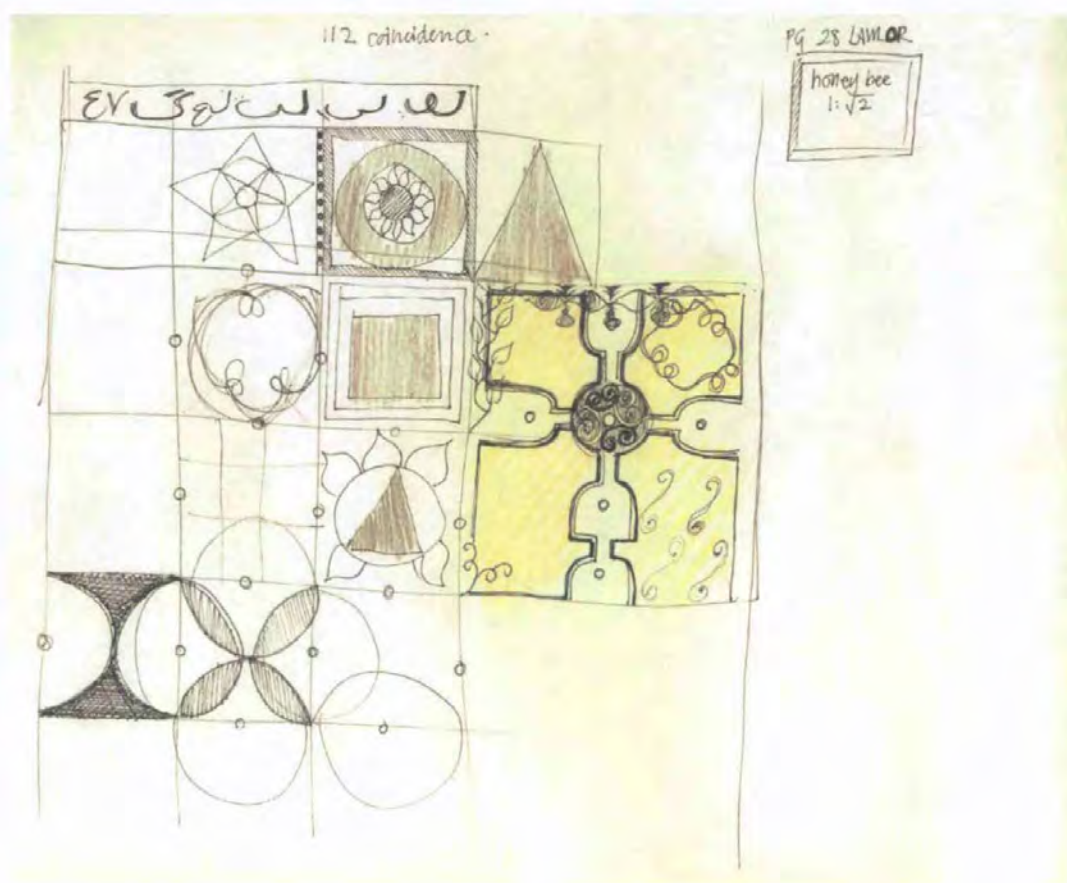


Illustration 2

<sup>16</sup> Used in most sentences in Arabic to mean 'if that is God's will it will be'. Literally translated as *God willing*.





Illustration 3

In spite of readings from and by others, I am nevertheless able to frame an independent thought and absorb the nature of the inner (that which I experience from within) and outer (that which has an impact on me from the outside) journey of discovery. The art pieces would almost 'demand' to be made, sometimes three in rapid succession and others after a long period of creative inactivity. The inner journey is that world of emotional response, relationships, feelings and personal issues. The outer journey is more of a practical one, the places we go, the objects we interact with, our living environment and the minute changes in location we make every day. The relationship with my work is a dialogue when the work is in progress. I have to trust that the understanding and sensitivity I have with the mediums will carry me through to completion. I do what is inspired and then leave the work to 'settle', by which I mean, leaving the work for long enough that I can constantly keep looking at the way in which my eyes 'read' the marks made and how the colours blend with one another. When I start to force or control the process the results reflect that. I noticed a very controlled element to the pieces which didn't 'live' off the page but remained dull and lifeless. Sometimes the results of the creative process were unexpected because I may

have had some other treatment/solution in mind, but ultimately the result reflected the feeling, if not necessarily the picture, in my mind's eye. It seems that the artistic journey until now has been a way of stripping the layers of self-creativity to try to find my authentic<sup>17</sup> style and therefore my authentic expression through the visual arts. It seems more apparent upon reflection that as the work develops, I can see a freer way of self-expression beginning to emerge. It's as though there is less trust at the beginning of the process and as time and experience gather, the small pressures of having to create something give way to the creation itself, in a more pure or fluid form.

The following seventeen pieces will outline an underlying theory of connection, for example that all matter and behaviours of matter connect, and that the interrelationship between various forms, natural and man-made can be represented, by way of the visual. I will extrapolate the intention behind each work with enquiry into the impetus and history behind the creative choices and the visual results. As a whole series, the pictures represent a continuous discovery and learning about form, shape, line, plane, dimension and number.

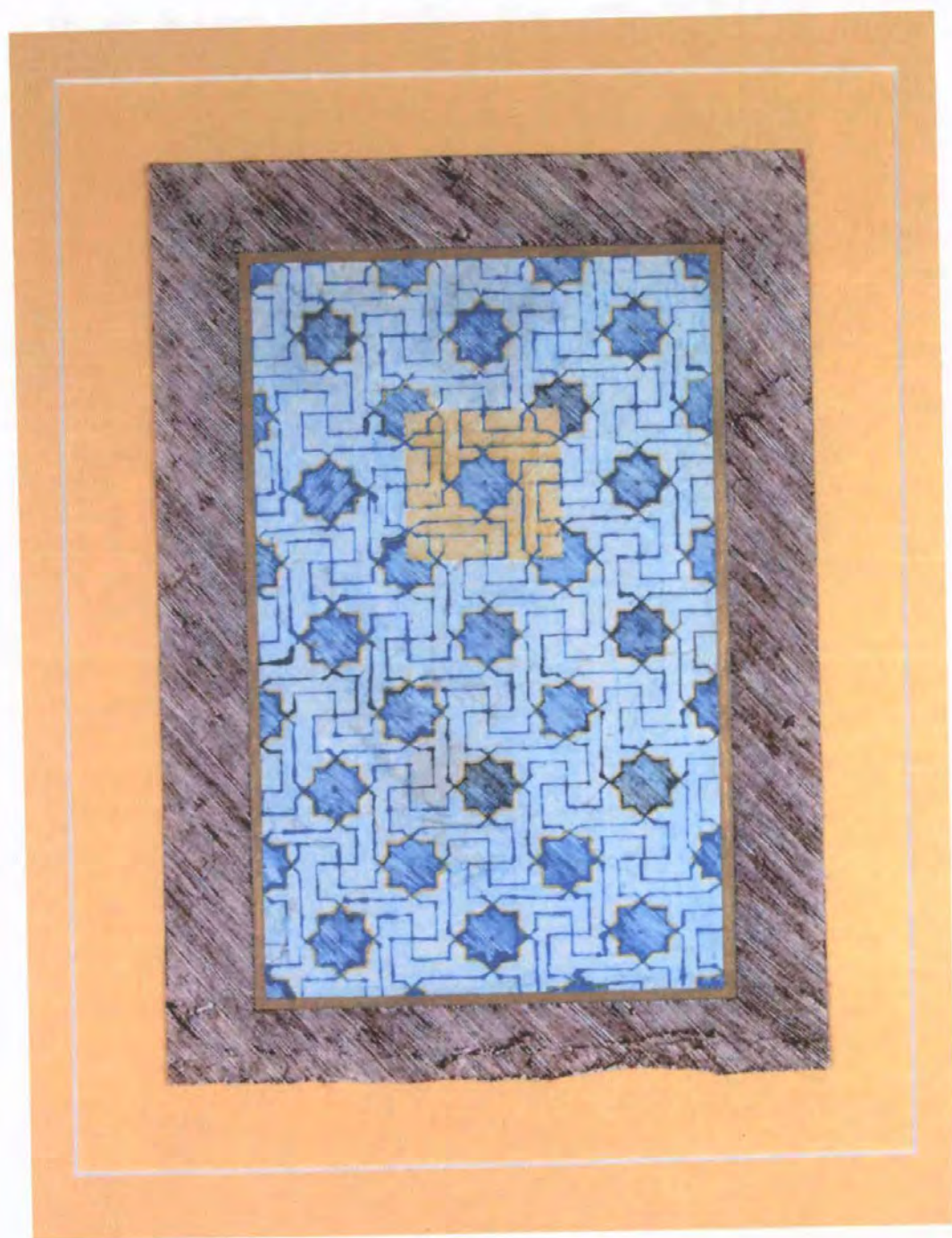
*No one should drive a hard bargain with an artist<sup>18</sup>*

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<sup>17</sup> The self expression which is closest to essence and less about what I have been taught to do, societies conventions and expectations or my own ideas of what is supposed to be the right way to make art work, etc. Authenticity being the closest I can get to allowing the initial impulse of creativity to be most truly represented from my feelings and thoughts to the marks I make on the paper.

<sup>18</sup> Van Beethoven, Ludwig (1770-1827)





**Screen of a Honey Bee I (May '99)**

*54cm X 69cm*

*Ink on handmade paper*

## Screen of a Honey Bee I

*Human beings are pattern-recognising animals par excellence.*<sup>19</sup>

*... begin by distinguishing between that which always is and never becomes from that which is always becoming and never is.*<sup>20</sup>

This drawing was a form of translation and relocation of an archetypal Islamic pattern which can be seen in the Qu'uran (usually on the first pages) and also in other Islamic books, and as motifs inside buildings carved into stucco or inlaid in tiles. This pattern is thought by Islamic scholars to lead one back to utter simplicity and stillness. It is said to suggest spirit manifesting itself through man, into matter; a form which is created by, and can be seen in nature.

This work required multiple and complex measurements to get the initial framework but once all the measured points were in place the rest was dependent upon the eye and free-hand of the artist. Although there are many points of reference, the actual pattern is still a matter of spatial awareness, in the service of making marks in order to govern the making of the image. There is something very satisfying about completing this type of geometry, something almost nourishing about looking at these patterns, because they are some of nature's systems of complexity and order and repetition. It is already subconsciously familiar to us because, for example, when given the option in the way we live we opt for pattern almost every time. It becomes like a very mindful meditation because of the continuous drawing of lines and angles, a sense of completion much like a dot-to-dot when the image appears through a series of connected numbers and a new shape emerges. Joining a dot to dot as a child I had the same sense of order and satisfaction. My deep resonance with this geometric image is equal to that when I see wooden screens using this design or

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<sup>19</sup> Pagels, Heinz R. (1985) *Perfect Symmetry: The Search for the Beginning of Time*, Simon & Schuster, New York. P.16.

<sup>20</sup> Plato (1974) *Timeaus and Critias*, Penguin, London. p.46

patterns on walls in the Middle East; I have a feeling of home and fulfillment. Just by seeing photographs of the image replicated in architecture, I am instantly filled with a desire to merge with it, which leads to a connectedness and a serenity, as if a deep knowing resides within and is stimulated by such designs.

Despite the fact that the basis of this is a replicated design (a pattern of a honey comb which appears in nature), I see that when I do, it looks to be absolutely mine and looks like art I have already done. It isn't necessarily habit but some deep part of our individual personality that makes every drawing of a vase of flowers different in a class of thirty pupils. So, like the adage which says that *all we can really write about is ourselves*, in art all we paint or create can only be about ourselves, rooted in personal history and experience. The inspiration has then to be filtered through a process which adds self and then imprints it onto the hand which communicates with the medium. Making art, which comes from within, creates a one way conversation with the viewer until the perception and analysis of the viewer is then projected onto the work. How can the work be interpreted or seen for the intention, experiences and meaning intended by the artist?

The fundamental concepts in **Screen of a Honey Bee I & II** explore notions of oneness, zero<sup>21</sup>, Spirit<sup>22</sup>, soul<sup>23</sup> and their importance and foundation in all aspects of existence. Primarily the point of departure is always that meeting place within; a place where all the strands and threads of life are gathered, woven, cut, sewn, some ignored and some so dazzling that it is impossible not to give them the attention they deserve. To locate that center within us is to, in some part, identify a starting point from which to create, but likewise it also

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<sup>21</sup> see page 13

<sup>22</sup> Spirit (*sunyata*) is that ultimate limit beyond all qualification which transcends everything and includes everything. Quantifying Spirit ceases to describe Spirit. This *essence* which is an un-harnessed life energy, vitality and force which precedes our physical body and brings forth more than just the body and mind.

<sup>23</sup> We are each the product of our consciousness and that is of the soul. Soul is *Being* in a non-dual state. The deepest place and sometimes the darkest place is that of the soul because it drives us in spite of ourselves; it propels us into our choices and desires; it exists outside time because it is eternal.

suggests that place of balance and strength in which everything reaches its conclusion. The Self, the ephemeral spirit<sup>24</sup> and soul, are the parts of everyone's journey of connection, to find the world, to find themselves. I looked at the space between the lines as being of as much significance as the lines themselves, the nothingness and the seemingness. Like the journey to locate spirit and soul, **Screen of a Honey Bee I**, also presents itself as a symmetrical maze which is ongoing and unyielding in its repetition, suggestive of the adage that no matter which way we turn, we find ourselves in the same place, with ourselves.

*All that scientists know is the cosmos was spawned from nothing and will return to the nothing from whence it came. The universe begins and ends with zero.*<sup>25</sup>

Used to mean many things, explaining nothingness, emptiness and absence, it took almost 2 millennia to accept zero into western vernacular because it was seen as threatening to all western philosophy. There was no such thing as *nothing*. It does not exist in the natural world. The notion of non-being owes a large amount to the human notion of the zero construct, originating in Babylonia. It has always been the root of the biggest questions in religion and science because the power of zero comes from being infinity's twin, the same and opposite as neither word is completely quantifiable. Zero begins the counting system by giving the number one a place to start from, but contrarily is placed after the 9 on all electronic or telecommunication systems. Notions of spirit, being, unity and the void are intrinsically linked to the Islamic cosmological schemes which have remained in accordance with the idea of zero which relates to their world view also, relating multiplicity to the unity of existence and to being - whereby zero is nothing and therefore everything and reality. It is written in the Qu'uran; *Does man forget that we created him out of the void?* In the 'Kernel of

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<sup>24</sup> Spirit (small 's') is alluding to that of a spiritual realm, a God within.

<sup>25</sup> Seife, Charles (2000) *Zero*, Viking, U.S.A. p.170

the Kernel' Ibn 'Arabi, the revered Sufi mystic, said, *You will be all when you make yourself nothing.*<sup>26</sup>

To embrace the concept that it is tantamount to nothingness and the void, the expanse which is both infinity and zero at the same time, I went on various Vipassana retreats at Gaia House<sup>27</sup> in Devon, during which the Yogi (practicing student of meditation) does not look or speak to another person for the duration. There is no reading, music, writing or doing other than eating, sleeping and meditating. The sitting sessions are continuous from 6am to 10pm all day. I found that after 2 weeks I had experienced a whole range of feelings and emotions and found that I would be happy to never speak again, for there really was nothing to say but a heightened awareness of everything including shapes, colours and sounds. The notion of perception and seeing the space as well as the lines was finely tuned at that time. By making art which deals equally with negative and positive space I was able to re-affirm the lack of duality between nothing and infinity, something and the void. An example of that can be seen in patterns such as this, where each line creates a pattern of shapes defined by both the positive and negative space; neither can exist without the other.

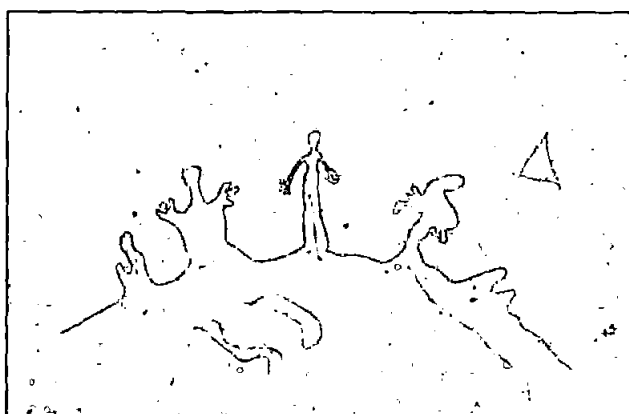


Illustration 4

<sup>26</sup> Ibn 'Arabi (1981) *Kernel of the Kernel*, translated from the original *Lubb al-Lubb* by Ismail Hakki Bursevi and translated into English by Bulent Sauf. P.34.

<sup>27</sup> Gaia House is considered to be one of the most prominent Vipassana retreats in the world and it is part of an established Dharma network, which includes Massachusetts, USA and Bohd Gaia in India.

If it were all lines it would be a dense mass of colour or tone and if it were all space it would be a blank page.

Ultimately, this piece of work, **Screen of a Honey Bee I**, deals with balance. By looking at a pattern comprised of the 'old order' of geometry, the negative and positive space represent harmony and perfect compatibility as both spaces and line segue into the each other. Yellow represents both the ochre found in natural formations such as sand, and natural sediments which suggest stability and foundation. Gold is used as a direct reference to the ornate usage of the precious metal in Islam where it is often employed to represent God and spirituality. The juxtaposition of earthiness and Godliness is another allusion to the idea of balance in the work. The repetition of line and pattern points to the infinite way in which nature constantly re-balances and seeks to create some kind of equilibrium at each turn.



*Plate II*



**Screen of a Honey Bee II (Aug '99)**

*50cm X 66cm*

*Ink on handmade paper*

## **Screen of a Honey Bee II**

*What we call a part is merely a pattern in an inseparable web of relationships.*<sup>28</sup>

The traditional design which I created is very common in the Middle East but also similar to the configuration of combs produced by bees, therefore revealing that the most fundamental designs within cultures can often be seen within nature. This work seemed like a natural progression, in this particular case, (which is not true of all my pieces which could proceed in any order) from **Screen of a Honey Bee I**. I wanted to enlarge the pattern of the geometric form of the honey comb to get a clearer sense of the forms and shapes, because like any repeated shape, it can be difficult to see the actual 'parent' pattern or reduced part of the image. The highlighted square in **Screen of a Honey Bee I** shows the complete form before it is repeated to make up the the continual pattern. For the unaccustomed eye, the arrangement of patterns/collection of relationships are seen as one, so it is necessary to deliberately point out the smaller template which is tessellated<sup>29</sup> to make up the larger design which is done by isolating a section of the image. Pattern, which is always made up of three elements; a unit, repetition and a system of organization, can be seen essentially as a collection of repeated lines, spaces and inter-relationships. Pattern is a fundamental organizing principal in nature, easily seen as symmetry on pineapples, pine cones, snakes skin etc. It repeats in many different ways, such as; translation, rotation, reflection and tessellation. We may never see the association, but all patterns can be ultimately traced back to some aspect of growth and form; an example of such being the spiral contained within the flowers of broccoli.

Ideas of one and many and multiplicity are explored and treated in this work; the 'one' being the mother template and 'multiplicity' represented by the repetition of such an image to make up another complete image, ad infinitum. The use of

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<sup>28</sup> Capra, Frijof (1997) *Web of Life*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. p.37

<sup>29</sup> The cross sections of a beehive show tessellation; no gaps, no overlaps and a single unit of repetition.

silver is uncustomary in Islamic art, but by using that, I created a more western-looking design, something akin to 1930's patterns like that of the wall paper or prints in Liberty fabrics which are tessellated and iterative. The colours I chose were a way of creating a juxtaposition of **Screen of a Honey Bee I** with something more passionate and urgent and opposite to the perceived subtleties of honeycombs. The hidden meaning in the colours is actually that of woman and the mother; red symbolising blood and menstrual flow and silver representing the moon; cycles of the feminine. The mother element to this work shows the initial seed or fertility factor which gives birth to others, shown through the isolation of the 'mother pattern' before it is repeated.

The drawing and measuring of this design was very precise. It is incredible that I had to spend hours marking and measuring and putting strategic dots onto the paper to only come part way to representing something so naturally formed in and by nature itself. Using a straight-edge and a ruler, I had to alternate between lines, as each separate mark was dependent upon the other for its exact placement. The co-dependence of each section in the pattern was intrinsic to overall fluidity and balance. Although I measured each mark and joined the majority of dots and marks with a straight edge, there had to be some freehand too as lines had to be curved and those specific curves and turns had to be judged by the eye and the steadiness of hand. I left the pencil marks visible as forms of trace marks, to show where I had 'been' and to give some insight into the working process.

Whilst looking at images, the human brain wants to make sense of the shapes, forms and colours which it sees. It strives to make links and connections. We subconsciously desire pattern and order and their relationship to shape and sign and we inherently embody it. The way in which the lines and spaces in this piece work together, reflects the undeniable relationship between everything, in that lines do not exist without space and visa versa. How else can we grasp and assimilate the tiny nuances and inner workings of the ephemeral nature of life

and self, than to try to comprehend the nebulous, and the co-existence of opposites? The process of perception involves the engagement of one set of patterns with another: *We perceive therefore we are patterned.*<sup>30</sup>

By having a basic understanding of the three fundamental shapes: the circle, square and triangle, pattern and geometry have their properties outlined. From these shapes all mathematical imagery can be constructed and the fragments themselves have individual meaning; fragments such as elliptical bites, wedges, slivers and obtuse corners. Circles give a sense of unity, completion and wholeness; something we identify and often draw from an early age. Squares suggest stability and groundedness. The triangle is seen as a much more 'spiritual' shape, often used to symbolize the trinity and complexity of otherworldliness; these shapes are sometimes used by art historians to develop an understanding of ancient art-works. By identifying the shapes created by the placement of objects and forms in the old paintings, the historian creates a deeper meaning thought to have been the formal essence the artist wanted to convey. However, I fear that contexts can be put onto art, giving the works a meaning which was not necessarily intended by the artists themselves.

To begin to understand how powerful patterning is in the world, I sat in the Alhambra in Spain, overwhelmed by the multitude of carved shapes on every surface. The visual silence which can be seen on a blank canvas or a flat, white wall, was drowned out by the complexity of the infinite configurations of patterned walls and ceilings. My body was subsumed by the depth of such intricate design and I felt as though I was merged with it. To experience pattern, I needed to be totally surrounded by it in an obvious way. I needed to be lost in its language and complexity, unable to stop my eyes from searching for its formal and structural dynamics. During the drawing and measuring of the **Honey Bee I & II**, I found that same sense of loss of self emerging in the continuous pattern making; finding my own personal journey through the connection of one shape and angle

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<sup>30</sup> Wade, David (1991) *Crystal and Dragon- The Cosmic Two Step*, A Resurgence Book, U.K. p.87



to another. It was through the direct experience of seeing so much Islamic patterning and then by finding the actual geometric rules for it that I had a profound sense of something more than just a beautiful visual image.



Illustration 5  
Wall in the Alhambra

*We generate the image through the intention, therefore prediction is always in relation to the observer.*<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Goodwin, Brian (1999) A lecture given at Sharpham College, Devon.

Plate III



**Alef ('97)**

62cm X 77cm

*Ink, cotton, gold thread on handmade paper*



## Alef

*When the ten thousand things are viewed in their oneness, we return to the Origin and remain where we have always been.*<sup>32</sup>

The idea of *one* has always been a fascinating and pervading thing for me. As an only child, I began to search for some way of not being a *one*, or an isolated being and feeling dislocated. I tried to adopt other peoples' relatives as my own. I began to search for my 'real' family, totally convinced that the parents I had must have been a mistake or that I was about to discover a whole, ready-made unit of fun and siblings. At seven, I had a definite desire to find myself at one with a family or a culture. Although I was happy to be alone and with myself, I also wanted to attach myself to an established group of people; I wanted to be a part of a whole, but what I knew was how to be apart from the whole, and alone with the self. At 28 I found out that I was conceived a twin....a brother had been present for most of my fetal development.

The only child

No more than one child

Not the only *two* children, but the only child refers to solitary and alone

A one, which needs another to complete its part as family<sup>33</sup>

*Even though you tie a hundred knots the string remains one.*<sup>34</sup>

When I made the connection that I was part of everything it was a revelation because as a small person growing up I thought that I would ultimately arrive at adulthood with a secret knowledge about life and living but that understanding

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<sup>32</sup> Sen T'Sen

<sup>33</sup> written by me as my first conscious response to the idea of being an only child – 1988

<sup>34</sup> Sen T'Sen

came by way of integration; less about the isolation of being a solitary one but more related to the idea of unity and oneness.



Illustration 6

Unity is represented by the number one, symbolised by the circle and its centre. Our first beginnings are that of a sphere or a uni-cell. *One* is perceived as isolated, singular and contained. Note that *one* is that differentiated thing because it is in relationship with other things and by that means we see that it stands alone or in a union of other *ones*. *One* is totality, the principal sum, both the whole and the part. A holon<sup>35</sup> is just this; a singular part of some other whole which is in itself simultaneously a singular part of a larger whole and so on. Considering a uni-cell as *one*, leads to the idea that a *one* is a point, a dot, a blob. In *Point and Line to Plane*<sup>36</sup>, Kandinsky wrote about the fact that the

<sup>35</sup> c.f. Wilbur, Ken as defined in all his books (see bibliography)

<sup>36</sup> c.f. Kandinsky, Wassily (1979) *Point and Line to Plane*, unabridged republished by Dover, New York



primordial element of painting is the point, that which has tension but no direction unlike the line. We are taught the number one in terms of a straight line, although what constitutes a straight line is actually two dots defining the length of the line. In almost every instance the notion of one, circle and relationship co-exist.

*When the **one** is set against all others, the **one** is seen as pervading them all at the same time embracing them all in itself.*<sup>37</sup>

According to Robert Lawlor *Unity creates by dividing itself*.<sup>38</sup> One is in relationship with itself, it is therefore in relationship with everything else. This is shown by  $1 \times 1 = 1$ , this only happens with *one* as a self-dueling solid. There cannot be two *ones* only unity and multiplicity. Two *ones* is  $1 + 1$  which  $= 2$ . Both the binary code and the Fibonacci series begin 0, 1, 1 ... *One* is totality, the principal sum.

In the course of his teachings, Plato spoke about his ideas or beliefs about the *one* or as he called it 'beyond being'. ... *in my judgment it is impossible that they have any understanding of the subject*.<sup>39</sup> Plato himself never wrote his teachings down but they have been made reference to in writing by Timaeus.

As we begin to look closer at the primary source of things, we can see that pervading ideas of *oneness* and the number one are everywhere. The beginning of the alphabet, the birth of language comes into existence with the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet which is also *alef*. One thousand in Hebrew is *elef*. *Alef* is also known as the breath of life, the coming into existence and unity. The idea of one and one thousand, being the same, reinforces the idea of one as many. Essentially all the information about one and oneness are all ways of showing that in which every direction we look, we find the way in which everything is a series of parts and particles, wholes, holons and ultimately all interconnected.

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<sup>37</sup> Mahayana Buddhism

<sup>38</sup> Lawlor, Robert (1995) *Sacred Geometry*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London. p.23

<sup>39</sup> Plato (1974) *Timeaus and Critias*, Penguin, London. 7<sup>th</sup> Epistle a.

This is oneness and this art work is an attempt to begin to address some of those points.

In making this art work, I used different coloured and textured papers sewn together like the multiple strata of sand and fine stone and shell in a desert landscape. Where the text would normally be in old Persian paintings, the five fundamental rhythm patterns; *pishdaramad*, *chaharmezrab*, *reng*, *tasnis*, *zabz* (as shown in the drawing) of Arabic drumming and clapping have replaced it. The central geometric column is the geometry for the construction of the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, *alef*. The significance of this letter is in the architecture and language of Islam, shown by the first letter A in the alphabet which is the long, tall shape, often replicated in Islamic buildings, as towers or minarets. *Alef* is also the word for 'one' and 'one thousand' and the minarets of the mosque are used to represent this notion of the first and the last. The Islamic world view of state and religion bound together in oneness is also in their most simple fairy tales which begin: 'The One, before there were any other ones ...'

The idea of *one* and oneness is described in so many different religions, teachings, spiritual and historical writings. For this reason I placed the central column, illustrating the construction of *alef*, alone like an obelisk on the paper; a solitary one, an isolated shape signifying separateness and unity (shown within the connected geometry used to make up the shape). This structural drawing focuses upon revealing the 'working' of key elements of geometry. Unlike the repetition in the previous two studies, in this work I wanted to show a golden mean rectangle and its re-divisions in relation to the idea of unity, oneness and therefore *one* and its related topics. The blue ink lines in the background are the constant re-division of the golden mean rectangle, thus creating more golden sections, using lines or repetitive 'ones' to create multiplicity and unity – one thousand and one respectively. The rectangle is sub-divided into 3 smaller and equal golden mean rectangles and then each one is sub-divided again; this can continue indefinitely.

By keeping the golden mean rectangle, almost imperceptibly divided by using fine lines and subtle changes in direction per rectangle, I intended to create a sense of oneness until the viewer took a closer look and realised that what was one is also many. The blue ink I employed was in direct reference to Islamic art which connected to the *alef* in the centre of the page. I feel that from this place of visually exploring *one* and geometric fundamentals such as the construction of shape and the golden mean rectangle, the viewer is then prepared for a larger scope of information with regard to multiplicity, complexity and variety.

*The wise call the One by many names.*<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Rig Veda 1:164:46

Plate IV



**Virus ('97)**

70cm X 73cm

*Ink, watercolour, acetate, collage on paper*



## Virus

*... all forms are only envelopes for geometric patterns, intervals and relationships.*<sup>41</sup>

Geometry reflects nature's propensity to deal with a line and a curve. Geometry reflects detailed mathematical proportions, the essence of life reveals itself through our engagement and understanding of mathematical proportions demonstrating beauty, growth, change, form and energy.



Illustration 7

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<sup>41</sup> Lawlor, Robert (1995) *Sacred Geometry*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London. p.5



*'It becomes necessary to reorganise the standard elements, to bring them into a meaningful & logical connection with one another, i.e., to create among the elements - and without disrupting their normative character - an order based upon a rhythmic arrangement.'*

Illustration 8

There is so much revealed to us through numbers in nature. There is probably some information which has been lost over time or is hidden from common knowledge but waits to be rediscovered. Aboriginal cultures may have been divorced from their heritage yet hold onto those patterns, like song-lines and chants and weavings as a way of understanding and connecting to their past and future. Number and counting is pattern and music and it makes up the most fundamental structure of our world. Being aware that it exists is almost a precursor to the beginning of unending questioning and enquiry about the nature of life itself. Pattern always exists but in naming or illustrating such patterns I have made them visible. What we see as chaos or dis-order is our lack of ability to see or know the unfamiliar pattern.

This piece explores geometry on a microcosmic scale, that of the common virus; something we can't see but can feel and experience. The acetate print is a repeat arrangement of a virus under the microscope. The basic geometry of each cell is adapted in various ways using gold leaf and inks on the paper. This was



the first ink and mixed media piece to be made alongside the research for this series. It uses a wide range of mediums: chalk, acetate, tissue paper, inks, oil paint, gold leaf, pencil and printed matter.

Sacred number was consciously and systematically used in deciding factors of the number of each 'like-image'. For example, the blue and black globes number seven, considered to be the number of the oracle, the eternal spirit. Seven is impossible to draw geometrically accurately without having the technology to accurately divide up millimeters to the hundredth. It is the number of the primary concord, the fourth (4:3) and of geometric proportion (1,2,4). Seven is made up of three and four; called *the four of materiality* and *the three of spirit* by Kieth Critchlow during a lecture at Buckfast Abbey in Devon in 1998. He also referred to seven as *the perfecting number* or *the virgin number* which is repetitive within religious ideology. In the Qu'uran, Adam was created from the seven earths; there are said to be seven angels, gardens, heavens, robes, ages of man, arms to a menorah, nails in a horse shoe and seven years of fire. To be in 'seventh heaven' is a commonly used expression linking to these religious influences. Seven in nature reveals, by the number of it's petals, the poisonous to man, seen in the nightshade or belladonna family. *Alef* which resembles a western number 1, is made up of seven tessellated diamonds. Types of motion in space equal seven<sup>42</sup>. There are seven planets, seven phases of the some moons and our inner world amounts to seven internal organs. It is also called that which brings completion, for 7 month embryos are viable to live outside the womb.

Other aspects of the painting have numerical significance. Both sunflowers and nautilus shells are superb examples of the Fibonacci series in nature, where any two successive proportions are multiplied equally in relation to one another. Sunflowers have a closed system of both clockwise and anti-clockwise spirals which always represent the values of the Fibonacci series. They have 55

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<sup>42</sup> Seven degrees of freedom in space ; time, position in 3-space at that time, and velocity in 3-space at that time. Every orbital location requires seven parameters. Cartesian coordinate systems; x, y, z, then rotation around x, y, z, and time.

clockwise spirals overlaid onto either 34 or 89 counter-clockwise spirals. The Fibonacci series was a revelation of understanding; a 'discovery' of existing pattern, or a formula created to describe a series of relationships. The thirteenth century mathematician, Leonardo of Pisa discovered that any two successive terms tend to be approximately in relation to one another. The beginning of the Fibonacci series is 0,1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34,55,89 ... ad infinitum. This series can be used to illuminate the patterns seen in the spirals of shells, sunflowers, fir-cones, and cauliflowers; in fact growth spirals exist in many of nature's formations. What we know of the rest of the universe indicates that similar patterns of organisation appear again and again through the entire 'extent' of known space.<sup>43</sup>



Illustration 9

The radius of the spiral of a shell increases with geometric progression and the radial angle increases in an arithmetic progression; these embrace all the ratios from which musical scales are constructed.<sup>44</sup> The *Spira Mirabilis*<sup>45</sup> is 'irrational' in numerical terms but is founded upon the Golden Section (illustrated in the background of the art work). The Golden Section is represented by the twenty-

<sup>43</sup> Sheldrake, Rupert (1988) *The Presence of the Past*, Harper Collins, London. p.302

<sup>44</sup> Goethe *Geometry is frozen music*

<sup>45</sup> The *Spira Mirabilis* or miraculous spiral is a spiral shell formation.



first letter in the Greek alphabet, *phi*, which is directly related to the symbol for the Christian son of God. This ancient connection between religious creator and fundamental creation mathematics and geometry, establishes another nexus between the elements of our cosmos.<sup>46</sup> In his book *Sacred Geometry*<sup>47</sup>, Robert Lawlor noted these values from the apparent 'macro-world' to the subatomic.

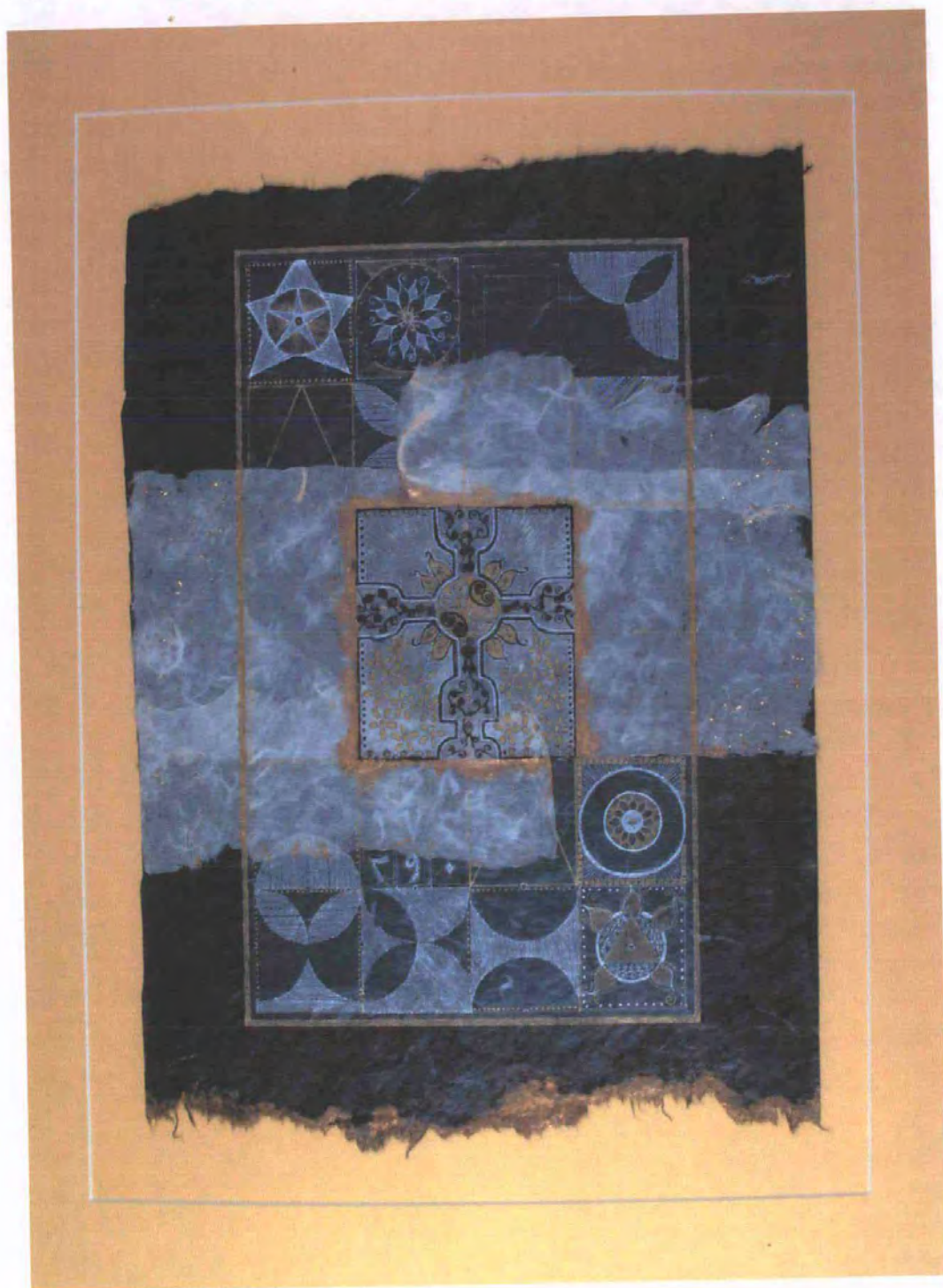
The use of many colours and contrasts in the art work was a way of indicating yet more complexity within the piece with direct reference to the physical elements and number in organic nature. The virus is shown as dark, black and ominous but with layers of acetate alluding to the transparency and fragility of the human condition; both the fated destiny of humanity and the positive elements of growth in life itself. I intended to show how growth, life, form and nature is imbued with dichotomy and tragedy; but also how it is all bound together with and in number, the simplicity of nature at the foundation of all complexity. The circles and spirals in the piece keep the flow of the work moving as the angular lines and rectangles ground the image and give it more solidity. The constant 'dance' between hard and soft, dark and light, curves and lines suggest the variety and convolutions in all forms of nature.

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<sup>46</sup> Gematria (from the Greek word for geometry, meaning '*the desert of wisdom*') is the calculation of the numerical equivalents of letters, words and phrase; to reveal new meanings and gain insight into relationships.

<sup>47</sup> c.f. Lawlor, Robert (1995) *Sacred Geometry*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London

Plate V



**Ancient Symbols (on Umbrella Paper) (Apr '99)**

*54cm X 69cm*

*Umbrella paper, chalk, ink on handmade paper*

### **Ancient Symbols (on Umbrella Paper)**

(See also illustration 2 page 13)

The paper for this was given to me by an artist in Queensland. She got many of them from Asia. It is one of the hundreds of handmade papers used in layers for the construction of oriental sun parasols. Although this piece of paper is fragile, it is continuously layered to create a strong structure to create the protective dome of the parasol.

This drawing uses the Indian and Thai Buddhist art styles and patterns in order to encompass ancient religious symbols and maintain and develop the link with the origin of the paper. There is repetition of the square, circle and triangle which are the most basic shapes at the root of art and geometric construction. The layers of phased superimposition of shapes make up the fundamentals of what we see and parallel the layers of paper used to make the parasol.

This piece does not and was not meant to represent any particular faith but it is more a selection of shapes which have been encompassed within all major religious art. Early Buddhism to Paganism through to modern day Islam and Christianity can all be seen within symbolic representation in this piece. Symbols and shapes can inform our way of seeing the world as we construct images which are primarily based upon the circle, triangle, rectangle and square; those which are our first experience of solid forms. We play with wooden blocks, with balls, with dolls houses. After points and lines and scribble, the first shape we draw is the circle and then we begin to represent our world by drawing shapes together to create boats, buildings, people and so on.

*All words fail*<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Elliot, T.S. (1935) *Four Quartets*. Burnt Norton No. 1, V.

Using language to define and explain ephemeral qualities such as 'the feminine' or 'spirit', is often unsatisfactory and symbols (such as the ^ meaning masculine) are ways in which the existence of something is also represented and has been for millennia. As each culture and religion uses a variety of shapes and images to create instantly recognizable identity (e.g. flags) and representations of deity; it is an interesting exercise to just use the shapes as a series of images without trying to make sense of the associations we each have with specific symbols. An example of that, in this particular piece, is that by drawing a cross it could be seen to represent Christianity rather than just symbolising that shape. Similar to representation as a means of expressing a thought or image, the first pages of the Holy Qu'uran are Islamic patterns. They are shown to the children before each lesson of religious studies, the foundation of all their teachings. It is difficult to convey a feeling of deep spirituality or belief in words alone, but the tradition and culture have a sense of the depth and wonder of patterns, as they are seen as a preparation for words. They are not thought to represent God, but suggest complexity, simplicity and completeness, speaking directly to the heart.

Within the felt sense that there is something beyond the tangible, without which it would be difficult to embrace ideas of connectedness on many levels; this piece deals with elements of that. The work I make comes from fragments of feelings; feelings which are capable of fragmenting because the mind intercepts them and each fragment has quantum properties which are the parts of feelings I dissect, ponder, re-work and analyse. An example of that would be of times when I go to galleries and see a piece of art and then for days I am left with what feels like a residue or re-occurring image of part or all of someone's work. I not only have a visual memory of what I saw but also a sensation of what I experienced through their expression. The personal world is really the only world we each know as it is through that individual filter that we perceive an ordered experience which is structured from sequences of thoughts and feelings. I am a kind of filter through which experience passes. In describing this filter, I may sometimes perceive that which is without which is fragmented and incomplete, but when filtered it

becomes patterned into a whole that enables my understanding of the world to be more balanced and known; less in the domain of probability. Explanations and de-constructions bring order to certain properties of experience and insights, to create a pattern from other patterns and introduce a set of probabilities for our understanding of the world. I strive for completion by making work and doing what I do.

*Soul<sup>49</sup> is individual, vernacular, cyclic, eternal, partly concerned with literal life and partly involved in it's own inner mysteries, concerned with poetics and nuances instead of explanation, and often raw and in need of an alchemy of refinement.<sup>50</sup>*

Ralph Waldo Emerson has been one of many to emphasise that the soul is one and the same in all beings. The soul is the subtle 'mind', the essence and indestructibility of our own being. As we look without for answers to needs and sanity (the fulfillment of the spirit and the intangible) we can be reconnected with such essences found within the breath of life; breathing in and breathing out and bringing awareness back to the most unifying and essential aspects of our existence. The spirit and soul are the archaic institution of the breath of life: the in-spir-ation for life.<sup>51</sup>

*...within man is the Soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related.<sup>52</sup>*

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<sup>49</sup>Soul means breath in many languages. There are no vowels in the Torah and the word for God has always been unknown as a spoken word in the Jewish faith. YHVH has become to be known as Yahweh and the most interesting and connected rationale behind this is the rhythm and sound of the breath. Beginning with the *in* breath on the syllable 'Yah' the *out* breath on 'hweh' and gradually as the letters become less defined the breath and its sound replaces the word, it becomes the word.

<sup>50</sup> Moore, Thomas (1994) *Soul Mates*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. p.233

<sup>51</sup> Inspiration: to breathe, inhale and take in.

<sup>52</sup> Wilbur, Ken (1996) *A Brief History of Everything*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Massachusetts. p.284

Thomas Moore writes about the nature of soul in many of his books, he says that *Soul is the poetry of our lives, most strongly felt when God is asking to be admitted. We are the stuff on which Soul's themes are imprinted.*<sup>53</sup>

*Spirit is the suchness, the isness, the essence of each and every thing that exists.*<sup>54</sup>

Spirit is universal, despite the different inflections created in world religions and beliefs. As Ken Wilbur states, *Spirit is the summit of being.*<sup>55</sup> Therefore, the search and desire for Spirit is also our common unity, that which keeps us striving and not arriving. Paul Gauguin wrote about the time he spent in a hotel room with Vincent Van Gough and he quoted Van Gough as saying, *I am whole in spirit, I am the Holy Spirit.*<sup>56</sup> In this moment of awareness (or madness, as both are often so closely linked), the reality of Spirit is outlined (although it fails because it contains what Spirit is and therefore by naming it, it ceases to become), for what is *not* Spirit? Many have attempted to describe this 'non-being', an all pervading state or condition of everything. What could be called the 'heart', is which Eckhart said was...*the only reality.*<sup>57</sup>

Through the images I created, it was my intention to express ideas of belief - what we sometimes attach to spirit and soul, that which has deep significance but we cannot quantify, wholly identify, completely describe or harness. By 'ideas of belief' I mean that which begins as an internal sensation and is mentally processed as an idea and guideline for trying to understand the world in which we each live. What can be interpreted as the soul of the piece of work I made is similar to that which has been described above; it is the essence being expressed through a specific medium and the subtle mind. Viewing the work may remind us of something religious, devotional or of a higher order. The stark and

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<sup>53</sup> Moore, Thomas (1994) *Soul Mates*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. p.228

<sup>54</sup> Wilbur, Ken (1997) *The Eye of the Spirit*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Massachusetts. p.44

<sup>55</sup> Wilbur, Ken (1997) *The Eye of the Spirit*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Massachusetts. p.44

<sup>56</sup> Schapiro, M (1994) *Theory & Philosophy Art: Style, Artist and Society*, George Braziller Inc., New York. p.154

<sup>57</sup> Wilbur, Ken (1997) *The Eye of the Spirit*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Massachusetts. p.307



simple colours of whites and golds create a visual space which suggests peace and tranquility and otherworldliness. Although this work shows symbols and images, it also alludes to something far deeper. The essence I tried to embody whilst creating this piece was that of simplicity and spirituality with a far-eastern sensibility in mind. That said, this piece also deals with multiplicity of faith and elements of belief shown with the layerings of translucent papers and the symbols making use of shapes suggestive of double meanings. The centrality of my religious understanding came from a Western Christian perspective, with Christmas and Easter being part of the yearly rituals from a young age at school. Although I do not think of myself as Christian, I realize the influence upon my early education. This is represented by the prominence and clarity of the cross-like shape in the work. Some of the other religious icons and symbols are partially obscured by the 'mist-like' umbrella paper; as though they are partially understood or emerging for recognition. I do, however, feel that what can be said about this work may take away from the experience of viewing it, as this above all others is the most weighted with popular symbolism and common shapes which already have a defined visual language. With that in mind, I have to accept that the viewer may completely misinterpret this work, something which was of concern to me years ago when I had to write on each of my paintings to try to influence the viewers understanding.



Illustration 10



Plate VI



**Light ('97)**

60cm X 76cm

*Ink, cotton on handmade paper*



## Light

Although I made this as one of the first pieces, I have not written this thesis relating to the order in which the paintings were completed, rather, in an order that I thought would enable the text to unfold in a more natural progression. The selection of what painting followed what, was less of an academic choice and more of a sensorial selection. Images and written word evolved simultaneously; they did not evolve in sequential orders. That alone has been the most naturally unfolding part of this process, that the work becomes a whole even though the intention was focused much more on the individual pieces rather than the entirety of the result because each small piece or section or painting was a 'world' within itself, a microcosm.

This work is the closest to the traditional Persian archetypal art work which defines the people and action within a delineated box and then narrates the action with poetry and text in separate boxes both below and above the piece. The work is almost cartoon-like with literal actions painted and text to support the visuals. The paintings are not naturalistic but flattened whereby the depth of field is not shown. The inner rectangle in red and the whole form of the illustrated frame is typical a Persian style. All the colours used are also common in Persian miniatures where they are quite precise about the colours they use within the genre.

The six<sup>58</sup> construction drawings of Islamic arches are the portholes through which light comes, doorways to the outside world, walk-ways to the inner sanctums where inner light can be found. Arches such as these are seen as doorways to the Mosques or ornate buildings, or windows in traditional structures in Islamic cultures. In old parts of all Islamic towns and villages, arched doorways and

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<sup>58</sup> Six is the first perfect number and that which nature uses to create its own constructed portholes, the honeycombe.

entrances are commonplace, even if they are simple wattle and daub constructions.



Illustration 11  
Inside the Alhambra

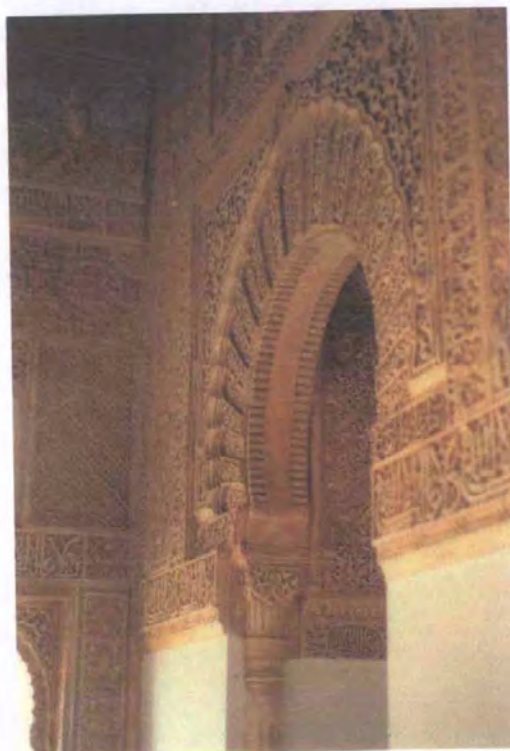


Illustration 12  
Inside the Alhambra

Potentially, all space can be sanctified. The links between sacred spaces and the body are referred to in many cultures. For example, the Japanese 'torii' is a sanctuary reduced to just a door which itself marks a sacred space. As a person passes through an archway, the dimensions of the arc are relative to the human form and the body resonates with a complimentary shape, for example the exact geometry and measurements in a door way could directly correspond with the curve of a shoulder, the arch in the lower spine or the roof in the mouth. The arch of a door in Western tradition symbolises the vault of the sky and this vastness is said to be symbolic of the omnipresent One. The door, the opening to the divine kingdom and the passage from one world to another, must embrace the nature of the sanctuary as a whole. The Aramaic word *Thara*, usually translated as 'door', is also used to mean everything that makes a transition from one form of reality to another. It is that which turns us from one mode of being to another, that converts, distills, or infuses something into something else. The more profound use of the ancient root of this word, THR, probably includes the Egyptian sacred name Ha-Thor, *she who presides over death and rebirth*, and the later word, *darvesh*, in the Sufi tradition - *the one who sits in the door-way between realities*. Metaphors of building and doorways are clearly seen in the Bible, Christ was referred to as the stone that builders rejected, that which became the head corner.<sup>59</sup> *I am the door: by me if any man enters, he shall be saved ...*<sup>60</sup> *But he spake of the temple of his body*<sup>61</sup>

The centrally located *kufic* (Arabic script) writing is the Farsi word meaning 'light' (pronounced *Nur*, and often used as a woman's name), illustrating the idea that Nur is the light which illuminates the geometry of the archways and the wisdom which is beheld therein. The script above and below the image is a small text of wisdom written by Shah Ne'matallah Wali in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. It says: *Be sure that any eye which sees the light, has seen it only by the light itself.*

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<sup>59</sup> Luke xx: 17

<sup>60</sup> John X.9.

<sup>61</sup> John ii 21

In Islam, as with any religion or spiritual thought, knowledge is not the revelatory opening of the secrets but the inspiration is in the awakening of the sentiment, the feelings, the spirit and essence as identification with the spirit as an essence of connection.

*Truly the Light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun*<sup>62</sup>.

Light is often used in many faiths as an allegory for spirit or soul. An example of such an allegory is shown in this early Sufi poetry:

*Be sure that any eye which sees the light  
Has seen it only by the light itself*<sup>63</sup>

*'I' and 'you' focus light  
like decorative holes cut  
in a lampshade.  
But there is only One Light ...*<sup>64</sup>

*Light upon light upon light – back and back we trace it to its Source.*<sup>65</sup>

Light is the thing that I can visibly identify, rationally understand and relate to; that which is as close to spirit and essence as I can physically get, within my system of beliefs. The reference to light is imbued with historical significance and visual and poetic metaphors, creating an 'otherworldliness'; a sense of deity and magic. Light has been used to represent a higher power since 600 BC when Ra the sun God was a worshipped phenomenon; sun or light worship amount to the same thing; the devotion to something seen but not seen. The Sufis and other

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<sup>62</sup> Ecclesiastes 11.7

<sup>63</sup> Klotz, Douglas Neil (1995) *Desert Wisdom*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. p. 41

<sup>64</sup> Klotz, Douglas Neil (1995) *Desert Wisdom*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. p.172

<sup>65</sup> Klotz, Douglas Neil (1995) *Desert Wisdom*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. p.49

ancient religious peoples gave it such reverence and wrote of it as a representation of their Gods.

Emerson said:

*All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ ... From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all .*<sup>66</sup>

The inner geography of the unseen is illuminated by light, without which there would be nothing as we know it. We would cease to exist were it not for light and many believe that light is God, whoever or whatever that energy is perceived to be. Metaphysical and religious thought from some historians concerned with architecture, state that stained glass is used to break up the crude light of the outside world into light of beauty and hope. Light becomes colour and colour becomes light.<sup>67</sup> As we look through a window, we see a frame around the natural world. Modern windows with an expanse of square glass, are considered by more traditional architects such as Kieth Critchlow, to be 'blind eyes', instead of sending our vision through window panes with a sense of proportion corresponding to that view of nature.

I remember how the light-quality has varied considerably in different countries. The light in Australia is almost blinding; the colours seem enhanced and cleaned; the Northern lights up in the lands of the midnight sun; lights which almost have a mythical, ancient quality about them; phosphorescence moving away from the bow of the ferry in Hong Kong as the millions of city lights respond with greater intensity, giving dimension to the 'velvet' night-scape. The magical potential for a fairy kingdom dancing between the soft shafts and slivers of light in a canopy covered wood...

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<sup>66</sup> Wilbur, Ken (1997) *The Eye of the Spirit*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Massachusetts. p.208

<sup>67</sup> The colour is thought of as love and is refracted in the soul. The potentiality of man, as the clear mirror is the colourlessness which allows the reflection of all the colours while itself remaining unconditioned by any of them.



Illustration 13

### Light Shall Be<sup>68</sup>

*And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from darkness.*

*Next, that Universe Being that brought  
elementary life into existence, from non being to being,  
sent a pure, straight ray of its intelligence toward  
the flaring forth of pre-elementary wave and particle-the light.  
The Cosmos drenched itself in lucidity  
and recognised the Light as ripe, that is  
capable of advancing the cosmic story.*

<sup>68</sup> Klotz, Douglas Neil (1995) *Desert Wisdom*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. An expanded translation of Genesis 1:3-4 originally Hebrew P.40

*It was an appropriate balance to the older Dark. This new character development  
led to the instant  
that would begin what we call time.  
Within the tendency of Universe Being  
to foster peculiarity for the sake of abundance,  
a natural differentiation then occurred:  
the Being of Beings divided  
Light,  
the flaring forth, expanding energy-  
straight forward, direct, intelligible,  
the mystery of all illumination, teaching and knowing  
from  
Dark,  
the gyrating, concentrated ardour-  
self-involved, curved, unknowable, and dense,  
the mystery of all chaotic and violent creation.*

### Metaphors of Light<sup>69</sup>

*God is the Light of the heavens and the earth  
The likeness of His Light is a niche wherein is a lamp  
the lamp in a glass  
the glass as it were a glittering tree  
kindled from a Blessed Tree  
an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West whose oil well nigh would  
shine, even if no fire touched it  
Light upon Light  
God guides to his Light whom He will*

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<sup>69</sup> A meditation on the Verse of Light, from the Holy Qu'uran, Sura 24:35





Illustration 14

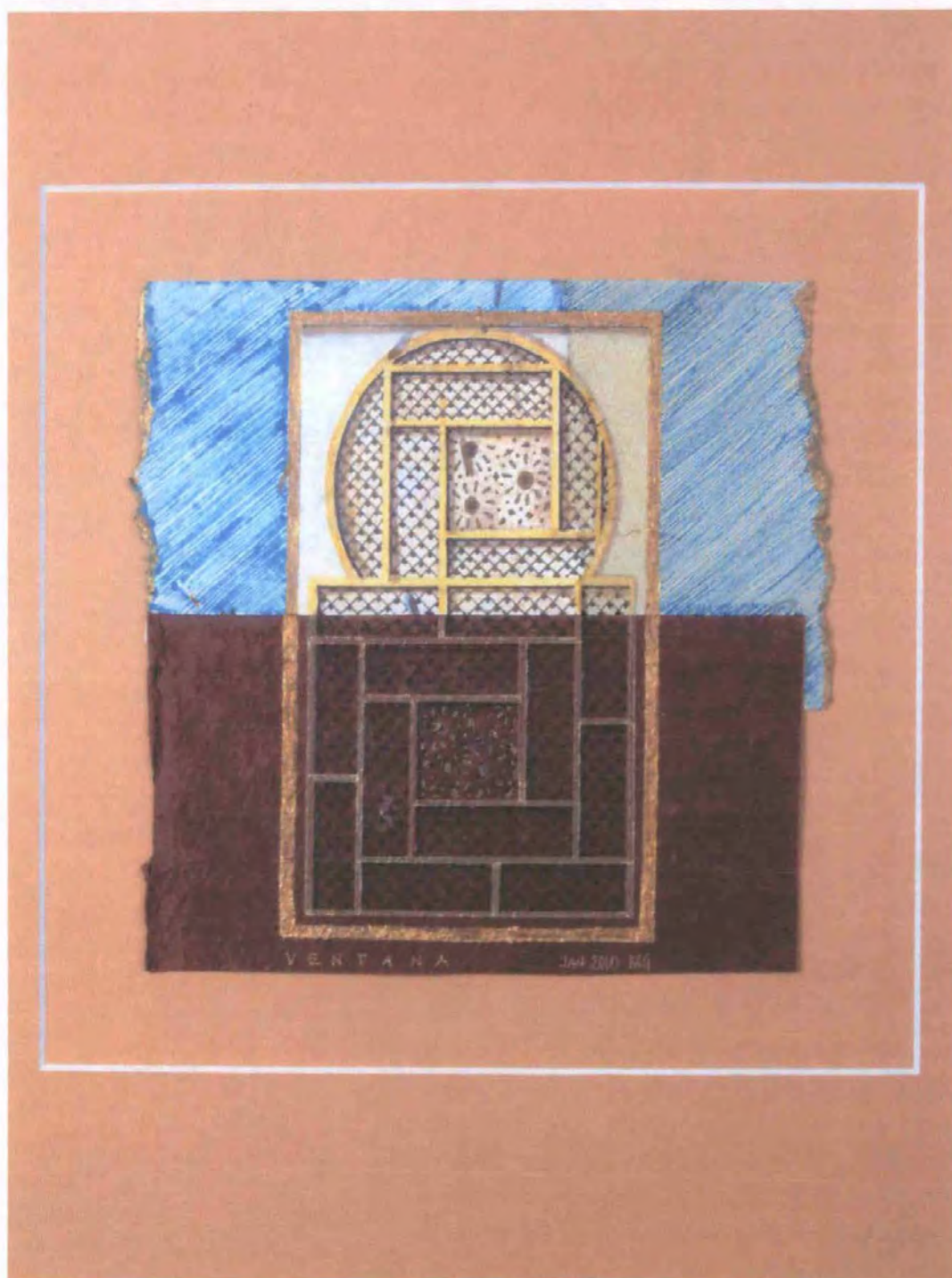
I once spent many days wandering around the old back streets of Bahrain looking at crumbling doorways, magnificent portals and ornate entrances to banks and palaces. I loved the alluring quality, the almost threatening feeling I got as I knew that each one lead to another world, that whatever lay behind that door was definitely other than what I knew. I saw blueprints and architectural drawings for the continuous house-building that went on, on the island; each person having to have their own huge white mansion which was filled with space and archways and surrounded by dusty rubble, until eventually a man-made garden was created, aided by irrigation and cultivation. I have always loved the



sparsity and clarity of architectural drawings and my first childhood/teenage ambition was to be an architect.

As one of the first drawings, this was a created from those childhood thoughts and memories of the excitement of doorways, arches and architectural blueprints. I wanted to embrace the feelings of the partly-revealed forms and the sense of the Middle East imbued in the work. By doing this I had a sense that I unified qualities of memory, space, light, mystery, culture and number.

Plate VII



**Ventana (Jan '00)**

49cm X 60cm

*Ink, chalk on handmade paper*

## Ventana

*I am plus my surroundings, and if I do not preserve the latter I do not preserve myself.*<sup>70</sup>



Illustration 15  
Typical old building in Bahrain

The old windows, *ventanas* in old Islamic structures, use various means to diffuse the light. Windows are decorative and the shape and materials are significant. Carved wooden screens act as permanent blinds to allow only partial light and heat reception. The wood is simply latticed, but in some cases intricately worked.

This work is an interpretation of a typical window, showing how various forms are used in conjunction with one another; arch, circle, rectangle, square and other

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<sup>70</sup> Jose Ortega Y Gasset: *Meditaciones de Quijote* (1914)

forms of geometric patterning. Interestingly, apparent irregularity, which is not often expressed in other architecture (Islamic or otherwise), is employed. It was only when I began to measure the elements of the window in Murcia, that I wanted to draw, that I realised just how irregular it was. There wasn't even a pattern of irregularity I could find in order to represent it accurately. That is not to say that there isn't some format by which it can be measured. The use of three different papers is to represent the decayed stone of the structure (a light wood and fiber mixed paper), the old wood of the window (a dark brown, thick linen paper) and the light which fills the holes (a very fine coconut fiber paper).

*The world, it seems, can be built more or less out of structured nothingness.*<sup>71</sup>

I grew up with the interwoven notion of spirituality within the visual aspects of the tangible world in the Middle East. Doorways to so many buildings and houses were all structured around archways and all marble floors were covered with intricate, woven Persian rugs. All around me the faith was made solid as the aniconic designs on everything, even the tissue boxes, reinforced 'religion as state' within the society. There was no escape from the religion; buildings and sounds and patterns everywhere; the skyline was pierced by the domes of the mosques, Arabic music blared from the open windows of cars and taxis and vendors sold Persian carpets and intricate wooden boxes inlaid with pearl designs. I was unknowingly influenced by my past and my environment (like most people of course); the juxtaposition of cultures and religions and my own unrootedness had a profound influence on my creative and philosophical sensibilities.

The windows from the street were always another secret veil, hiding the inhabitants from the prying eyes of the world. The black veil and the dark covered shutters of the windows created a seemingly constant state of covert life. Nevertheless, I felt free as a child growing up in a segregated world. The idea

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<sup>71</sup> Sheldrake, Rupert (1998) *The Presence of the Past*, Harper Collins, London. p.297

that Islam was anti-women as the world portrays and perceives it, was alien to me. I felt special. I felt precious and powerful. I sometimes chose to wear the *abaiya* (black head and body covering) and felt so amazingly free when I could walk around totally free of the male gaze. Islam wasn't part of my conscious world but I was surrounded by geometry, *kufic* writings, mosques, and Arabs every moment of every day. It was my culture even though I lived within fragments of different religions, beliefs and cultural systems. The impact of being raised in any culture cannot but affect the person on such a deep level that layers of self are constantly triggered by re-membering and re-connection.

The varying thicknesses of paper and the density of this piece of work gives a sense of the narrow streets and the small windows which were the inspiration for this work. However, I feel that the work does represent the sense of closed perimeters needed to convey such meaning, I feel uncomfortable with the small and cramped nature of the piece. I am also aware that the almost illustrative quality of the work leaves me feeling unable to let my mind create infinite other images and visual ideas. This work spells it out; it is a window, it is a narrow and small confined image of windows in the Middle East. In retrospect I would have liked to have created that exact notion without being so literal.



*Plate VIII*



**Sacred Eight (May '98)**

*56cm X 67cm*

*Ink, gold leaf on handmade paper*

## Sacred Eight

I was sitting in a tiny study room overlooking the Thames; about 5ft x 6ft. The room was just a curved window and a door in and a door out, one chair and a desk. This room was one of the oval rooms sitting on the hexagon base of this stately home in Richmond. I started making this work after finding a book on an old book case in this house. I was inspired by the images of old Buddhist paintings. I began to explore and to connect notions of spirals and circles, circular thought, growth patterns and the saying 'what goes around, comes around'. Out of the darkness of the paper comes a pointillist image expressing the wheel of life, samsara and re-birth. The style of this, although adhering to the original Persian format, has a much more Far Eastern sensibility, using filigree details, swirls, patterns often used in the religious drawings of Buddhism. The circles made up of tiny dots (circles) replicate patterns in water. This was a study of the balance and equality of the number eight, not only the most propitious number in Chinese cultures but also the symbol of infinity. This work expresses both simplicity, (using muted tones), and by using gold paint, an aspect of regality is shown; both influences existing side-by-side in Buddhist cultures.

In Buddhist philosophy, eight is thought of as the number of the heart, signifying rebirth and baptism. As the most auspicious number in China, a dowry for a wedding has to be made of eights; \$8,888. The eight paradises are also accounted for in the eight traditional architectural forms<sup>72</sup>, like the finite number of notes in the Persian musical scale. The minaret,<sup>73</sup> is the eighth traditional architectural form<sup>74</sup> and stands like the letter *aleph*<sup>75</sup> as a link between heaven

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<sup>72</sup> Garden, platform, porch, gateway, dome, arch, chamber, minaret.

<sup>73</sup> *Minaret* derived from the word *manara* a place where fire (*nar*) burns. Manar or light turret was once part of the Christian church and a menorah or candlestick is still a central part of the Hebrew faith.

<sup>74</sup> Minarets were derived from the Roman temenos towers of Damascus or church towers. The new square revision of the structure for the Islamic faith was to symbolise a new belief system amongst a predominantly non-Muslim population.

<sup>75</sup> *Aleph* is the name for the first letter of the Arabic alphabet. This A is like a slightly curved line made up of seven diamonds end to end. The diamond is made from the centre point of tessellated hexagons; i.e.: the points of one shape become the faces of another



and earth. It occupies two planes, vertical as spiritual and horizontal as material. On the material plane, the minaret acts as a boundary pole or milestone<sup>76</sup> to define man's position with creation. *Aleph* looks like a number one, the line which connects two points, in this case heaven and earth. There is a strong correlation between concepts of oneness, the 'One' (i.e.: divinity), computation and the structure of shapes; we see interchange between the words and their double meanings and the ideas that certain structures point to the heavens with reference to God. There are generally two types of minaret. The square types were built before the thirteenth century and are found in North Africa and Southern Spain, as a result of the Syrian influence during the Islamic invasion. Two minarets are seen to be a symbol of discrimination and four are a reflection of material wholeness.

The octagonal dome relates to the eight paradises in the Qu'uran. To lighten the weight of the dome it must be covered with patterns and colours to suspend any disbelief that God does not exist, by deceiving the eye and the mind and creating something akin to a vast and endless expanse. The decoration leads the onlooker into the miracle of beauty and distracts from the man-made nature of something which is built to represent paradise. Its colours are prototypically white, green, blue-green, turquoise, gold or neutral tone of tile work, brickwork, plaster and muted combinations of these. The interior and exterior patterns match the convoluted flow of prayer and satisfy the longing of the soul. The non-imagistic art intends to lead the viewer back to utter simplicity, to the unseen world of 'seemingness', this is why the art is 'flat' and without dimensions of depth, so that there is very little realism to it. Islamic art attaches art to wisdom; art founded on science and nature. This divine art is in the beauty and regularity of the cosmos, such as geometry of form and mathematical divisions of shapes. The abstract quality of the patterns underlies the fact that, like poetry, the power lies in how much is hidden. The images speak for themselves; obscure to the intellect but native to the heart.

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<sup>76</sup> *Mile* is a word from old Persian.

I don't like art work which is figurative or representational, I prefer geometric drawings, architectural drafts or beautiful text. I love space, free curves and marks on the paper which allow me to add my own interpretation in a much more non-literal way. The artwork I make is more about shapes and writing, rather than 'does *this* look like *that*'. Nothing is ever finished and the more it looks like work in progress the more stimulating I find it, like broken plaster and old walls of the alleys I knew... partly destroyed, layered, sad and fragile. By walking through the streets of old cities like Granada or Bahrain, even parts of New York, I see the textures of buildings crumbling away and eroding with time. Such forms partly reveal and therefore partly obscure and tantalise with their multiple aspects, all of which inspiring me to paint such conditions of texture into my work without necessarily alluding to the fact that I am painting or drawing walls or structures.

The similar anti-iconic bias of Islam only arose during the eighth century and was enshrined in the Hadith,<sup>77</sup> not in the Qu'uran. Islamic geometric designs are excellent examples of symmetry and ordering. Flat images lead us back to utter simplicity and religious Islamic art is always presented in the world of flat spaces. Unity is reflected in the harmony of the multiple, in order and equilibrium; beauty has all these aspects within itself. As Islam is centred on unity that cannot be expressed by way of an image; the logical essence of Islamic art paves the way towards a non-individualistic beauty. That is to say that the artist of any given Islamic design is not denoting personal self, in as much as he becomes the channel for the expression of Islam. The patterns exist; the Islamic geometry is known but its configurations may change at the hand of the artist, albeit ever so slightly. The art is of reason or of science, not a fantasy which half reveals truths. The abstraction in Islamic art is ennobling matter and nature which expresses the law of unity in multiplicity. Islam is a layering of religions and cultures to make the unity of man and creator comprehensible, unlike the Christian tradition of man

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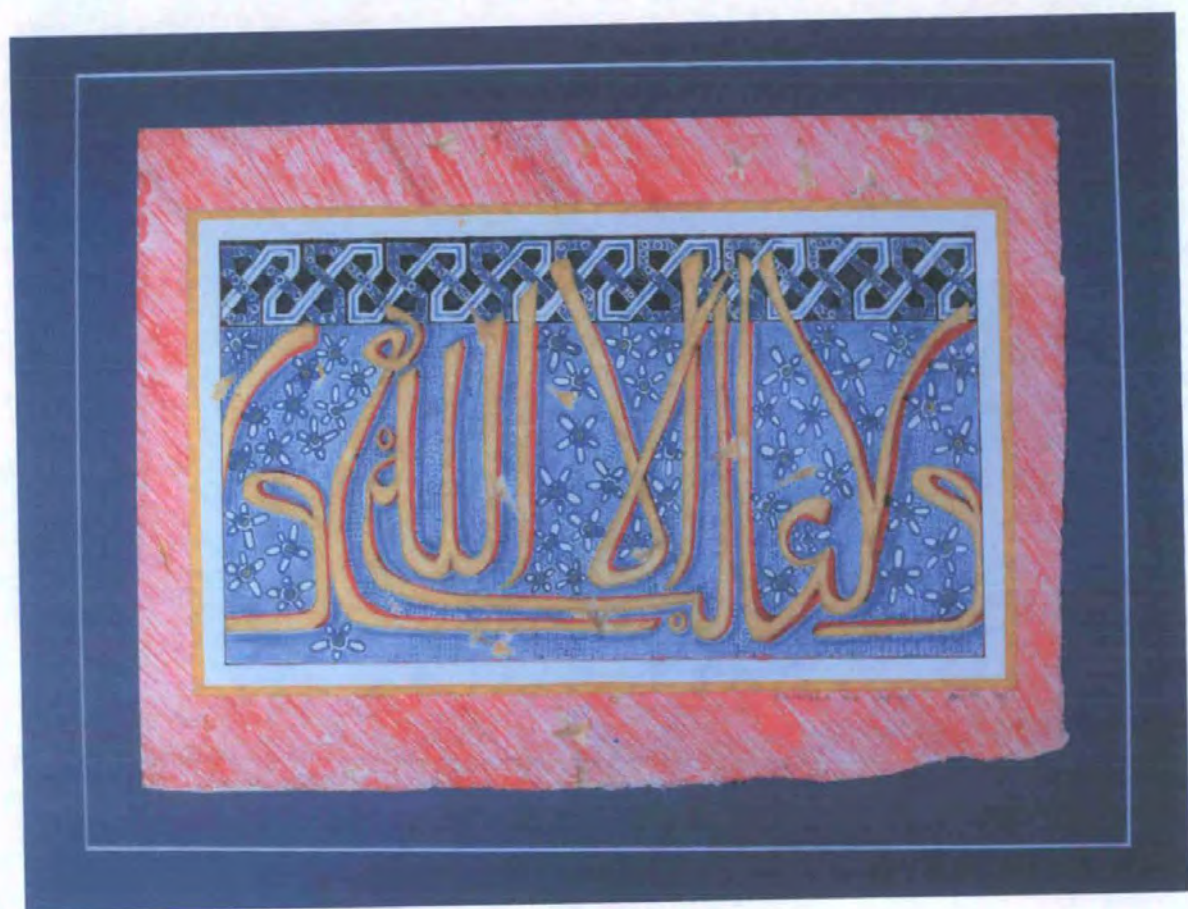
<sup>77</sup> The Hadith is a book of Islamic stories written by the people on behalf of the Prophet. These stories are used as a guide and a mode to live by.



which lies beyond the initial perceptions; to look further into the seemingness and view alternate states of 'reality'.



*Plate IX*



**Alhambra and Casino (Dec '99)**

*52cm X 62cm*

*Ink, coloured pencil on handmade paper*

## **Alhambra and Casino**

(See also illustration 3 page 14)

In 1998, during a six month research period in Cartagena and Murcia in Southern Spain, I found Islamic patterning in the casinos and local gathering halls. I obtained permission to sit and sketch some of the designs. Throughout the Alhambra in Granada, the repeated *kufic* writing states that, '*there is no God but God*'. The plaster carvings are intricate and complex.

This piece of work combines Islamic art from both places – the place of irreverent gambling and one of the most sacred examples of Islamic beauty. The flower pattern behind the writing is taken from old Persian art but this idealized style of five petaled flowers is also amongst the carvings in the Alhambra. This flower is symbolic of a pattern representing a flower rather than an actual study of a specific flower with its depth, symmetry and different kinds of non-uniformity.

I remember the mosques rounding out the sunset skylines in the Middle East. The building of the 'new' mosque in Bahrain took years. It was built on a huge piece of wasteland between the water and the highway. The large domes were enticing and almost like fairytale palaces. In fact some of them were the domes of the royal palaces. Gold and white, the domes gleamed in the sunlight. The mosques were forbidden territory. When there was no one around, I used to stand in the immense arched entrances and experience the sheer size of the structure. At prayer time, I pretended to be walking past but would try to catch glimpses of the rows and rows of bare-foot men praying inside. The piles of leather sandals in the doorway looked like a jumble sale. I could never understand how the hundreds inside would find their own pair of shoes at the exit. The houses in the Middle East were all about entrances; wonderful, ornate doorways and huge entrance halls for receiving guests. Halls could often be the size of three other rooms, big with high ceilings and marble floors. The entrance hall had some soft seating area, a guest bathroom and usually a huge sweeping



staircase in white marble. Islam never seemed to me to be about disrepair, but in my eyes I saw it as a religion of the wealthy. The furnishings in friends' houses and local places were always colourful, lavish and threaded with gold. In my father's house, there were rooms I never even went in, such as the guest bathroom in the hallway. This was built for the purpose of those people who don't enter the actual living space but hover in the hall. Guests are thought to be God in Islamic teachings, hence greeting God with the biggest space in the house, the hallway. All the rooms were off from the entrance hall. Bright, light, silent, spacious and peaceful; that's what I remember about entrances in homes in the Middle East and every home I have had has been a way of re-creating that feeling. I have few possessions. No ornaments. All ceilings are high. All floors are bare. All seating is low and there is never anything in the centre of the room, just lots of space. I wasn't aware that I was on a tight tape-loop, re-making the familiarity of the homes I loved, but in retrospect that's what has always occurred.

*Quien no ha visto Granada no ha visto nada*<sup>78</sup>

Coming from Bahrain, I was amazed to find such striking similarities in the Arab/Spanish culture, but never more so than in Granada, set at the foot of the Sierra Nevada. I walked through the narrow streets and saw the crafts and people of the town. I felt as though I was in the *souk* (market) of Bab Al Bahrain. Men were sitting on small stools outside a tiny room which was crammed full of wares; carpets or ornaments made from pottery, t-shirts and leather goods.

The long occupancy of Granada, by the Moors, is apparent. It seemed surreal to be in a European country, speaking the language but feeling as though I was in the Middle East; an Islamic world set in what is now Catholic Spain and modern Europe. The other strong connection for me was that we had always had a small home in Spain which I had visited throughout my life. The houses in Bahrain and Spain cemented the deepest Moorish tendency that continued in me. I embody

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<sup>78</sup> *He who has not seen Granada, has seen nothing. Old Spanish saying.*

those cultures. I walk with the physical memories and sensibilities of both cultures.

It has been said by many philosophers and scholars that architecture can express profound truths of the universe. Titus Birkhardt for example, said *It is impossible to be engaged in architecture without becoming implicitly engaged in cosmology.*<sup>79</sup> It may be for this reason that the most beautiful and magnificent buildings are of religious, and/or cosmological origin or purpose. Vitruvius included amongst the eight qualities of an architect: following the philosophers, understanding music and being acquainted with astronomy and the theory of the heavens. Such attributes suggest that architecture is much more than bricks and mortar and it is in its most pure form when it is applied using aspects of spirit and the less than tangible.

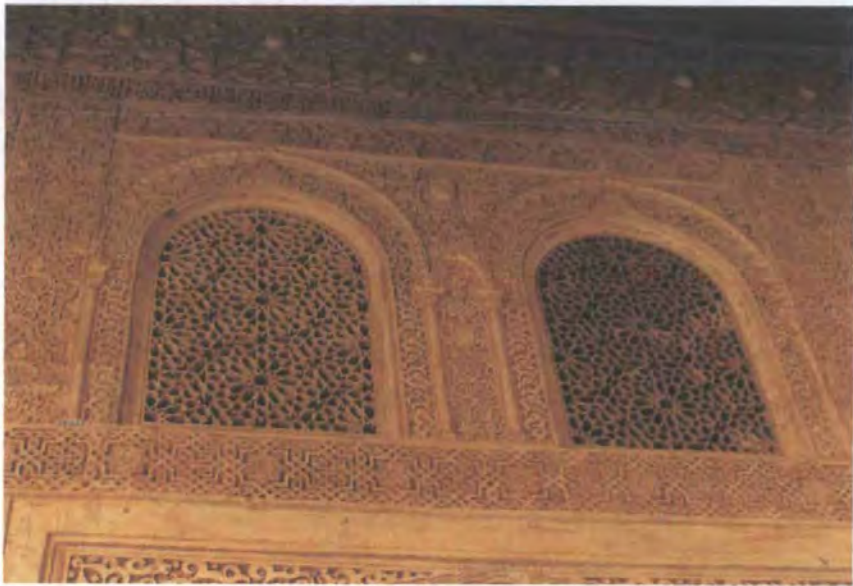


Illustration 17  
Inside the Alhambra

<sup>79</sup> Keith Critchlow, (1997) Quote from lecture at Buckfast Abbey, Devon.

The expertise employed to build and decorate the buildings and grounds of the Alhambra reveals styles and forms seen even in the new Islamic structures and Mosques today. The Arabs are said to have discovered all known two-dimensional patterns and these are tiled and carved on the walls and floors of the buildings of the Alhambra. It is the Islamic custom to cover all empty surfaces with pattern, just as nature attempts to fill every void. The universe is assembled from matter which behaves in terms of patterns and shapes. Patterns often articulate volumes on the walls flat surfaces. The patterns and images of Islamic art lead us back to utter simplicity according to Muslims and also the late artist, William Morris<sup>80</sup>, who talked about the absolute necessity of pattern as *a wall against vagueness ... a door for the imagination*.

Islamic art and patterning is only done as a tribute to God, and with absolute reverence. The process of creation is thought to come from a higher source and weaves together all aspects of the self and divinity. The essence of the life force reveals itself as geometry and pattern, elements of which being found in all of nature's creations. The study and observation of nature inspires and reveals integrity that can be applied to almost anything man-made. When the whole process and significance behind creating the patterns are known, it is clear to see why the pattern-maker who works in mosques is a sage of a high Sufi order (*Hafiz*). Through years of apprenticeship, he learns how to *feel* the patterns and create them from within before doing anything practical. The sage can, and has to, recount the Holy Qu'uran word for word. He uses his religious serenity during the 24 hour visualisation process of prayer and fasting in order to allow the divine image to come to him. Each tile is laid colour face down in an amazing process of envisioning. The image is never checked or 'seen' until it is on the wall or mounting surface. In this 'worship' it is said of the 'One' that *'Image cannot contain Him, but He contains vision'*. This craft is the stripping away of what does not belong. Contemplation and prayer brings the artist closer to self, closer to the 'Origin' and he becomes the door between worlds, witnessing the movement of

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<sup>80</sup> As quoted at a lecture at the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL.

the information coming through. And the original beauty which appears, is in direct relation to the original beauty of the witness. Likewise, words and images and music come through the poet, artist or musician as though the open channel of the self is just a pathway to expression.

In the medieval Islamic world, calligraphy fulfilled a central iconographic function and the Qu'uran was written in angular, exacting *kufic* script. There is a belief that it was not until the second half of the eighth century that images were replaced by words and designs in Islamic art. *Kufic* writing is now as much part of Muslim pattern as the geometric designs. The two dimensions of the Arabic script are symbolic of weaving: the warp corresponds to the permanent essence of things and the weft links one thing to another and expresses the 'becoming'. The right to left writing goes from the (right) heart towards (left) the place of action. The aniconic art of the Qu'ran is thought to become elements of spiritual algebra containing rhythm.

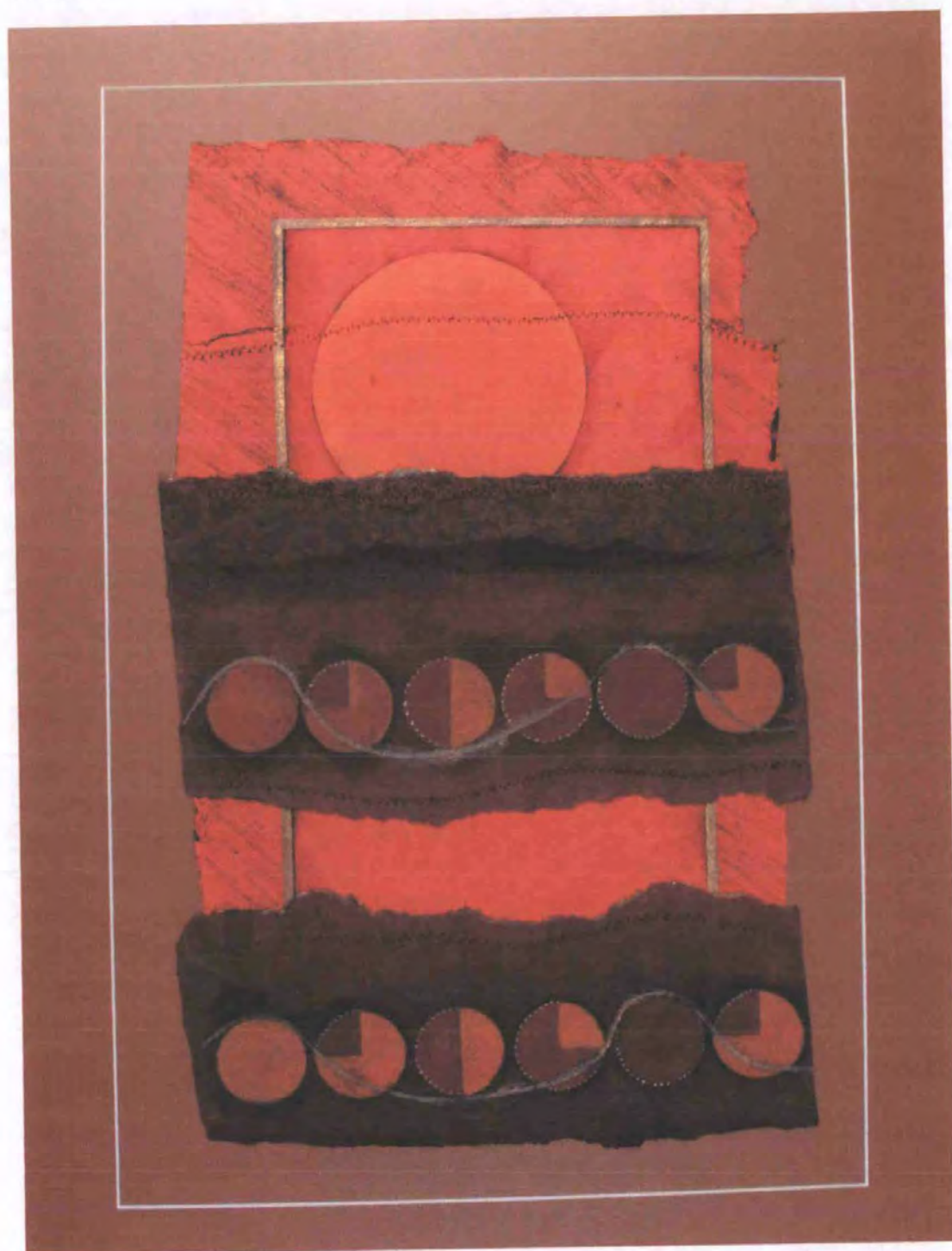
As my art began to develop into something other than representation, around the time I was at the Slade School of Fine Art, I used to write on all my work. I would use transfer letters submerged in the layers of paint or I would use ink on the unpainted parts of the canvas. Writing was a way for me to express more than I felt I could with just images, but it was also a lot to do with my desire to be totally understood. I found it hard to accept that viewers always bring their own perceptions and interpretations to the work despite what I may or may not write (unless of course I wrote a detailed text upon the canvas). This reminds me of the work of the American cartoonist Crumb, who began writing more and more in the speech bubbles until the text was the whole of the cartoon and the illustrations disappeared. In my case, the writing lessened as the patterns increased.

In *Alhambra & Casino* I wanted to emphasise the *kufic* writing whilst creating a structured patterning alongside it. Although there is writing, I use Islamic text

more as a decorative script creating movement and depth, not something to add literal meaning to the work. This piece is much more structured and rhythmical than the others; it is traditional in nature and ordered like part of a decorative tile rather than a free expressive piece which has an undefined formalism. It is one of the only sketches which I painted as a final piece of art almost unchanged.



*Plate X*



**Wave Formation (June '98)**

*54cm X 73cm*

*Ink, chalk, watercolour, cotton on handmade paper*

## Wave Formation

*'Sweat, tears and salt water- all things are healed by the ocean.'*<sup>81</sup>

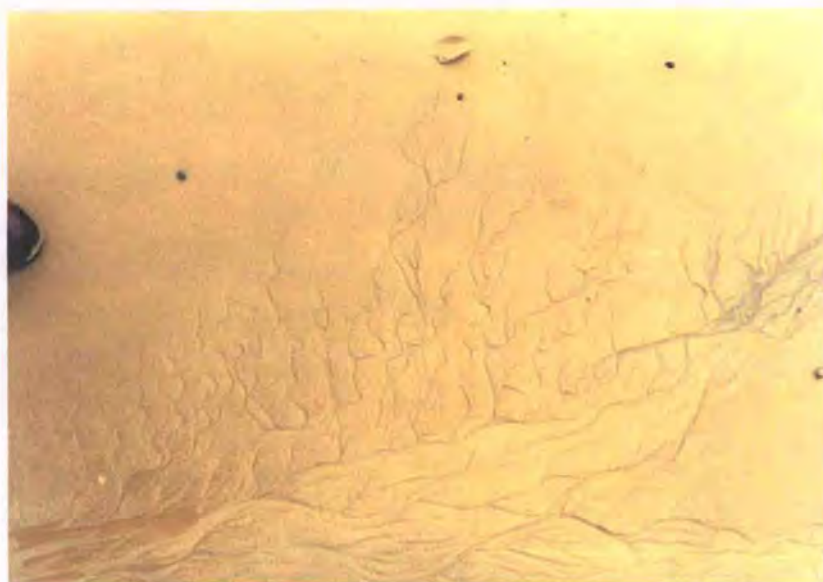


Illustration 18

I used a layering of paper, like a layering of horizontals on the horizon, as the landscape in the distance changes colour and quality, like constantly overlapping waves on the shore. The circle is used to show the construct of wave-flow by being fractions of the whole circle. The top crest of the wave rises at the top part of the circle and as the wave crashes it descends down the underside of the next suggested circle. The circle remains even if only by elements of itself - a quarter or half exists because of the circle. The flow of wave formation looks like a curved line rolling over the circles, whereby the circle is divided up into fractions of the curve. It reminds me of sheet metal between foundry rollers.

The largest circle rises in the background like the moon that controls the tides. Waves and the moon become reduced to circles and their divisions. The use of

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<sup>81</sup> Isaac Dinesen quoted from a found magazine article. He is an author of many novels, including Out of Africa.



earth tones, burnt oranges and rough paper, is an intentional direct inversion of the traditional watery, moon colours and gentle qualities associated with the subject. I wanted to represent power and ferocity through colour.

The patterns and complexities which occur in water and its behaviour are summed up by biologist and author Brian Goodwin ... *patterns arrive spontaneously from complex chaotic dynamics of the living state*.<sup>82</sup> Nature has structure on all scales; those which have become apparent through science. The flux of water is a perfect example of changing forms which still have a basic structure within their system. That structure is flexible enough to enable it to embrace the transitions, from ice to steam for example. Chaos is organization with a more complex set of identities. There are connections between ourselves and all aspects of the universe, some can be seen within the science of things but some are sensed and remain as imagined possibilities. Water is an aspect of nature which is thought to be separate from living things because we actually see how plants and animals grow or we see defined shapes in organisms. Water is contained by its restriction, or becomes formally defined in suspended shapes such as hail, snow or ice. The configuration of water is like the spirals and flow patterns in many forms of growth. Patterns in bone formation, rock strata and elements in every living organism show reiterations of water as the basis of life.



Illustration 19

<sup>82</sup> Goodwin, Brian (1994) *How the Leopard Changed its Spots*, Scribner, London. p.169

*Water rhythmically heats up and cools down .... This pulsation or alternation can be likened to breathing; a positive temperature gradient representing the inward breath, the absorbing, material-collecting movement, the negative temperature gradient representing the outward breath.*<sup>83</sup>

The most changeable and *seemingly* un-patterned part of nature is water because it is hard to see what water is made of. It is constantly in flux within its molecules, changing shape and texture. As Goethe once said; *the only evidence for life is change* and water is a prime example of this; from vapour and steam, to water and ice formation. Water appears in the air as vapour; it is also a solid and a liquid. It is a unique compound that can dissolve anything within time, as it wears and erodes. Both acid and base, solid, liquid and gas, water takes fluid form as is required - waves, spirals, whirlpools, droplets, jets, and in its constant flux, becomes patterned in the air as clouds and mist and in solid form as hail, ice and snow.

*Everything is water, water is all*<sup>84</sup>

I have always been interested in water and how it makes me feel. I usually live by a body of water; the sea or a large river.

Bahrain is a collection of islands joined by bridges. The islands are so tiny that no matter where you drive, the sea is always around the next bend on the near horizon. The sea at the Sheikh's<sup>85</sup> beach was as hot as the air temperature and we had to jump into a chilled pool to cool off from the sweltering, salty ocean. I took Dhow trips on ancient wooden boats into the Arabian Gulf, for the day, with one-toothed pearl divers.

I lived by the sea in South Wales as a very young child and the fishermen brought their catches home by wooden boat at night. I could walk down the hill

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<sup>83</sup> Coates, Callum (1996) *Living Energies*, Gateway Books, U.K. p.158

<sup>84</sup> Thales only recorded statement.

<sup>85</sup> Bahrain is a kingdom. The Sheikh spends most of his time living at his beach palace. The beach is open 365 days a year and supplies its guests (anyone who is NOT Arab) with free soft drinks and fruits from the various trees.

and there were only some partly rotten posts to separate me from the drop down the stone wall into the water.

The Moray Firth is a bay in the North of Scotland, and I walked along pebbled shores every day. The sea was a force to be reckoned with every 1<sup>st</sup> of January when inspired members of the community would take a new year's day plunge.

The Star Ferry was a delight for me. It cost but a few pence to take that metal barge from Hong Kong to Kowloon. At night Hong Kong was lit to brilliance and its reflection bounced off the water.

My father's house in Spain looks out over the Mediterranean. The sea is a reflector there, moon over the water. Summer swimmers fill the beach; then desolate sands appear at sunset.

I ran along the banks of the Thames where it meets the outskirts of London; mostly muddy and accompanied by the early morning rowing teams, all digging their oars in at dawn.

Now I live in Brooklyn, and the Hudson River divides me from Manhattan. The Hudson lights up with the bright orange, winter sunset. Liberty stands in the middle and Circle Line ferries chop up the water in their wake.

Water has the ability to absorb the sky. The sea looks like a crystal blue ocean when the sky is clear and cloudless. The river looks dull and flat because there is no light coming through the trees.

Water and ourselves; reflective and reflecting, it is our life force. It moves through us and around us, reminding us of the impermanence and the fluidity of all energies. *We follow nature in composition.*<sup>86</sup>

Comprised of water in my physical make-up, I am also filled with the memories and present-day feelings about water. They flow through me, through the water on the paintbrush and my feelings mixed with pigment on the canvas and on the paper. Liquid paint flows and forms images. In such thoughts about flow and water, I felt that making work which seemed visually opposite to that which is commonly associated with water and liquid, would create a visual dichotomy

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<sup>86</sup> Emi, Lendvai (1979) *Bela Bartok*, Khan and Averill, London. p.29



which would be vibrant and challenging. I generally associate blues, softness and transparency with the quality of water, so I used dark, burnt colours and thick papers to represent notions like the water under the desert floor or hidden aspects to the all-pervading element of water. The small 'trace marks' across the paper point to evaporation, water once there, dried up streams; the ebb and flow of being and non-being. To accompany this particular work I re-wrote the following words describing the continuous force that water, life time and life itself has over our existence.

*Soon the urge to struggle to the surface,  
to breach the elemental barrier, lessens.  
Eyes adjust to see the brilliance beyond the black.  
Limbs, no longer supporting, learn to fly through fluid.  
Whilst the mind expands to live within all dimensions.*

*Here, far from the brittle certainties of land,  
ever-changing possibilities abound, fed by currents  
flowing from afar, constantly enriching my attitude,  
altering my view.*

*Uncertain of the future but,  
free of the past  
I am aware that I am alive.  
That to grow we must live, and to live  
we must move beyond any fixed horizon  
placed in our blinkered view.*

*Alone, amidst the expanse,  
but linked anew,  
I no longer desperately search for the shore.<sup>87</sup>*

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<sup>87</sup> An adaptation of a poem sent to me, written by my friend Tim McCall 1989



Illustration 20



**Because These Mountains are the Cathedrals of Tomorrow (Apr '00)**

49cm X 69cm

*Ink, watercolour, silver thread on handmade paper*



## Because These Mountains are the Cathedrals of Tomorrow

*Nature is the source of all material things; the maker, the means of making and the thing made.*<sup>88</sup>



Illustration 21

This work was inspired by the Andalusian mountains. I found that by this stage, three years into the process of making my work, the art began to be slightly more representational of the seen physical world, moving away from the hidden constructs of geometry and/or music. That is not to say that I began to make illustrative drawings but that there became a closer correlation between the visible world around me and my art. As I previously stated, I do not like representational work, but I find that the art I make isn't always what I like but

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<sup>88</sup> The Bahagavad Gita 13.20 (This quote is listed as circa 500 BC)

more about what feels natural and prescient at the time of creation. In this particular piece, I made direct reference to the mountains which is very evident upon viewing the piece because it is almost naturalistic (although it could also be said that the mountains look like waves).

The multiple circles came from a much earlier piece I made in '97 when I created a DNA spiral with multiple circles which I drew individually with single lines. The initial process was extensive and time-consuming due to the number a different sized circles. This, however, was a partial re-visit to that work. I wanted to have more texture and depth, so instead of drawing everything, I used paper and bark from the 'paper tree' as a means of representing the fragility but commonplace nature of earth and mountains. Nature from the Latin, *natus*, meaning *that which is born has to die*, expresses what we know about all things on the planet, although we often think of life or elements of it, as permanent. I wanted to show this duality of experience (that of life events) and belief (assumed feelings about spirit, soul and the fabric of life) by combining ink (permanent) different mediums like bark and tissue paper (delicate, transient and translucent). Also by using more dramatic colors, less greens and foliage colours and more purples and blues, which may not necessarily be an instant association with mountains, I thereby challenged the way in which I perceive colours and their very typical associations with nature and form.

*Nature imposes values because it is creation*<sup>89</sup>

When I made this work I was in Moorish<sup>90</sup> Spain, which is located in the South of the peninsular. It is the terrain which I felt most accurately brought together many of the fragmented strands of my memories about culture and tradition, and

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<sup>89</sup> Goodwin, Brian (1998) *How The Leopard Changed Its Spots*, Scribner, London. p.215 (Gunther Altner 1991) -*Natur-Vergessenheit*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

<sup>90</sup> The word 'Moor' is actually a corrupted word referring to the people who came from Morocco. It was initially used by the Christians of the Iberian Peninsula when the Muslims lost administrative control of Portugal and Northern Spain.



enabled me to explore them there. This place is where I spent many vacations over the years as a child and adolescent, but it also holds the roots of the Islamic culture whose traditions I shared for 20 years in the Middle East. This area of Spain has a traditional insular culture, but has developed this fixity through diverse historical influences. Although my most extensive experience is of the Middle East, I am restricted in my complete understanding and ability to discover it by my limited Arabic and by being a woman and therefore prohibited from discovering the depths of culture and landscape in the Arab world.

Biological evolution shows that all forms of life on earth are related and nothing exists without relationship. Living systems arise from a configuration of ordered and chaotic relationships. Gregory Bateson stated that in order to accurately describe nature, one should speak nature's language of relationships, as pattern, structure and process are inseparable properties in the phenomenon of life. Bateson noted that because ... *number is the world of pattern ... a ratio between two quantities is already the beginning of a pattern.*<sup>91</sup> Structure isn't pattern. Structure is the physical embodiment of patterns of organisation, within the organism's nature. All ordered patterns seem to indicate the presence of a governing intelligence and although the organism appears to maintain its form, its matter is in flux.

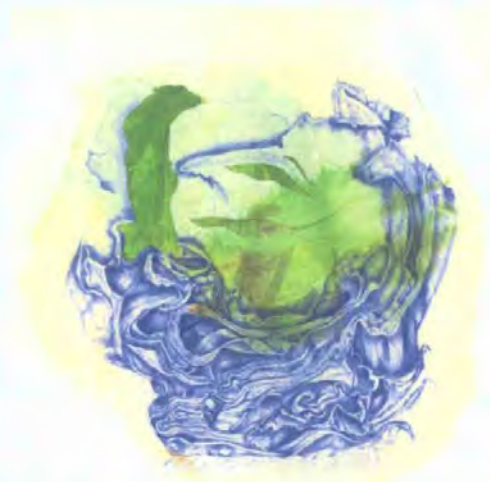


Illustration 22

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<sup>91</sup> Bateson, Gregory (1979) *Mind and Nature*, Wildwood House, London. p.53

Transcribing and relocating nature is what I have done in various ways in many of my pieces. I show geometric configurations like the inner workings and mathematics of the form and I also reveal elements of the external shape of the form by presenting my version of nature such as these mountains or in drawings of water or configurations of a honeycomb as shown in plate I and II. To show myself and reveal my inner most thoughts essentially means that I display and re-construct elements of my perception and understanding of nature and the external world through representation. This particular work represents my thoughts about mountains interwoven with previous explorations of shape and texture. Of course, I am *of* nature; patterned by nature, but to reveal that which I 'am' or my essential nature, that is best shown in how I express my perceptions of my world. We each inhabit the same physical world, but our experiences are such that our re-telling of that experience is unique. This work shows the aspects of self through the use of various materials; soft tissue paper, brittle tree bark, subtle water colours, uneven paper surfaces and the black inks used to define boundaries and edges, each of these facets is representational of the self; myself.

Please note; what appears to be a human figure crouching and holding the mountain on the left of the piece. It is the only accidental or unintentional suggestion of a human figure in any work I have ever made. I didn't 'see' this image until years later.



*Image XII*



**Dancing Flamenco (Sept '99)**

*43cm X 60cm*

*Ink on handmade paper*

## **Dancing Flamenco**

*Water ... strives to dance, to waltz ... instead of flowing straight. We cannot define it on a material scale, but it is nevertheless a form of energetic expression. Water possesses character just as much as you and I.*<sup>92</sup>

This 'drawing' is a representation of the nature of water's qualities of movement as a parallel to Flamenco dancing. The importance and centrality of both water and dance to Southern Spain are represented in this one image. I looked at the similarities between water, its behaviour and the way in which it has been used, controlled and suppressed and I noticed direct parallels between that and Flamenco.

The spiral formation made by a water vortex is solidified in more tangible forms in nature such as mushrooms, women's fertility organs and embryos, for example. Water is a recurrent theme which underlies most of nature's designs and growth patterns. The patterns and shapes can be seen as flow and fluidity, similar to the quality of the spinning skirts of the Flamenco dancers. Their particular movements, in the dance, feign spirals and twists which generate movement patterns in the fabric of the skirts, from the small hand positions to full body turns; the dancer becomes a water-like vortex.

Southern Spain is the natural environment of Flamenco in Spanish history, and water played an essential role in all aspects of life there. In 15<sup>th</sup> century Spain, Muslim Scientists were unrivalled in the world, but it was the ancient Babylonians (circa 1750 BC) who were at the centre of the Arab sciences. They were masters of canal engineering, flood control, land surveys and irrigation techniques. These great engineers/astronomers were also able to predict tides and with their knowledge of the land, they could irrigate effectively, so harnessing water's full potential. These skills were adopted by the Arabs who took such knowledge to

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<sup>92</sup> Coates, Callum (1996) *Living Energies*, Gateway Books, U.K. p.74

Spain during their colonisation. When the Moorish occupancy of Southern Spain finally ended, the Spanish Christians killed all the remaining Arabs found in the villages and mountains. The only exception to this was the one, solitary man, who was spared because of the knowledge he held to the understanding of the waterways. This specialised information was the key to survival in the remote, arid, barren landscape. Water was, and still is, a very precious and sparse commodity in less populated regions of Spain. The flow of the rivers is an integral part of rural living and is consequently the life source.

The use of water in the Alhambra, for example, is intrinsic to its wholeness. The river Darro runs underground in the city center, which made it an excellent place to settle as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. The elaborate methods of pumping water to the top of the hill on which the Alhambra was built, was a great feat in its day. However, following expulsion of the Moors who had rebelled against Philip II, vital irrigation systems were destroyed and the knowledge was lost.

The multitude of fountains, rivulets, decorated pools and geometrically shaped ponds within the Alhambra grounds, remind us that water is the source of life. Water provides an even greater sense of movement, vitality and freshness. The reflections of the buildings in the various pools emphasise the transience of life as the solidity of the reflected image is constantly fragmenting, dispersing and reassembling. Water reflects and becomes a form of representation and display, equally beautiful and decorative, practical and reflective. Water is used within and around the structures as another way of presenting nature and self-reflection, both conscious and sub-conscious, to the observer. It always attempts to adopt its natural energetic flow patterns in order to regain its former vitality.

By observing the Flamenco tradition, it becomes a lens through which the cultural integrity and essence of life in Southern Spain can be revealed. Flamenco is a creative expression of deep spirituality, an example of the traditional arts inherent within the culture and within the hearts of the people.



Water has *duende*<sup>93</sup> like the nature of Flamenco dance, which has specific laws and rhythms which need to be expressed in the right conditions. The flowing skirts are reminiscent of water spirals, cascading and furious. Like the water harnessed to meet the needs of man, the women are like this flowing energy; held, controlled and released during periods of vitality and display. The spinning skirts, constantly manipulated throughout the dance, are comparative to the flow patterns of liquid; water and blood. The way in which the billowing, cascading folds of cloth are folded and manipulated by the dancer, suggests the continuous way that water is used, possessed, manipulated, transformed and then ultimately, coming to rest. Rudolf Steiner noted that, *Man is a form proceeding out of movement*.<sup>94</sup> Flamenco dance, expresses many shapes and patterns which describe water, from stillness to flow and changing forms.

*The purpose of the upwardly curving tails at the ends of the spirals is to exploit the very last ounce of the waters' momentum.*<sup>95</sup>

This observation about water could also be true for the spinning of the female dancer who raises her arms to propel the turn. The dancer's fingers follow one another in a spiral, a pattern is repeated constantly throughout. In fact, the more we look at the Flamenco dance; almost all movements remind us of the different properties in the different guises of water.

Embodied in this work are the technical drawings and measurements of a water vortex through which I intended to capture the sense of the dynamic properties of flow and movement. Rather than making a literal drawing of anything Flamenco related, I wanted to capture the essence of the spinning dresses and flowing fabrics of the dancers, as they make fast turns and spins, by drawing something parallel in the natural world. The way in which the illustration is graphic and technical actually exposes the fluidity of the vortex and so the clean lines of the

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<sup>93</sup> A Spanish word used to mean soul or spirit when referring to a Flamenco performer.

<sup>94</sup> Steiner, Rudolf (1944) *Eurythmy as Visible Speech*, Anthroposophical Publishing Co., London. *preface*

<sup>95</sup> Coates, Callum (1996) *Living Energies*, Gateway Books, U.K. p.178

drawing enable the viewer to sense the movement and energy within the water. The seemingly dry and analytical nature of the work is exactly opposed to the passionate, vigorous nature of Flamenco. Such polar opposites show just how interlinked even the most opposing forces of natures are.

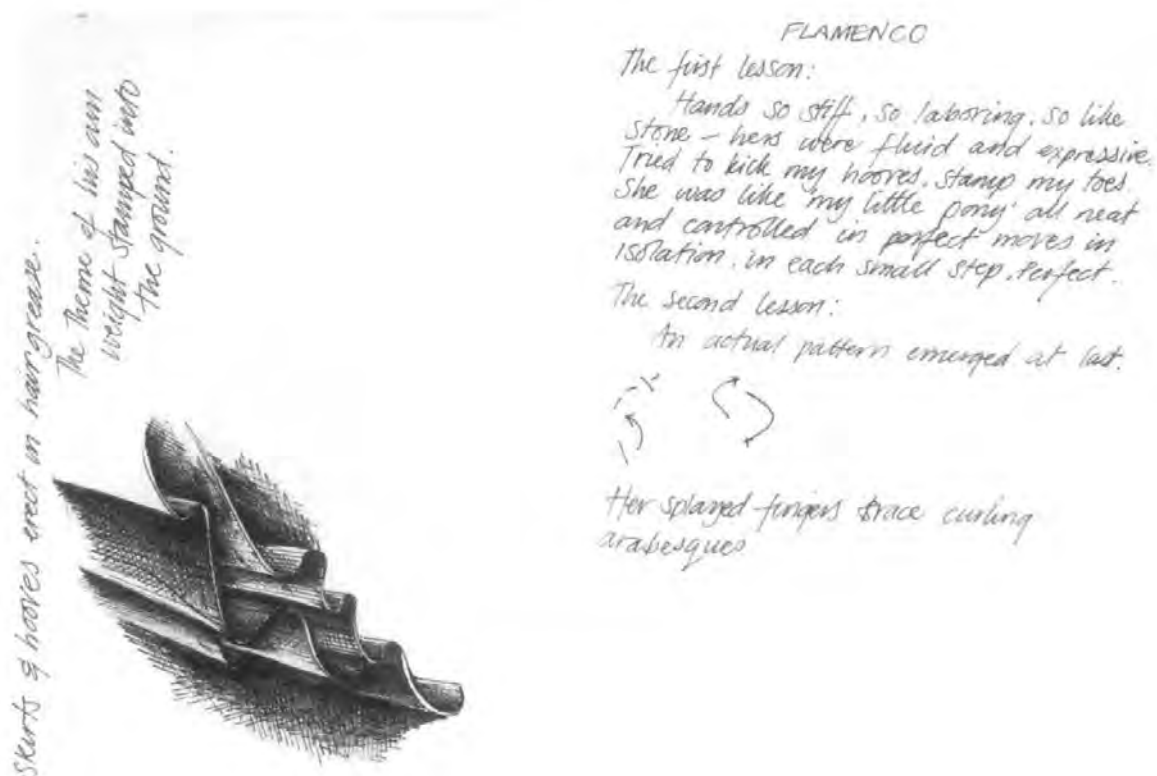
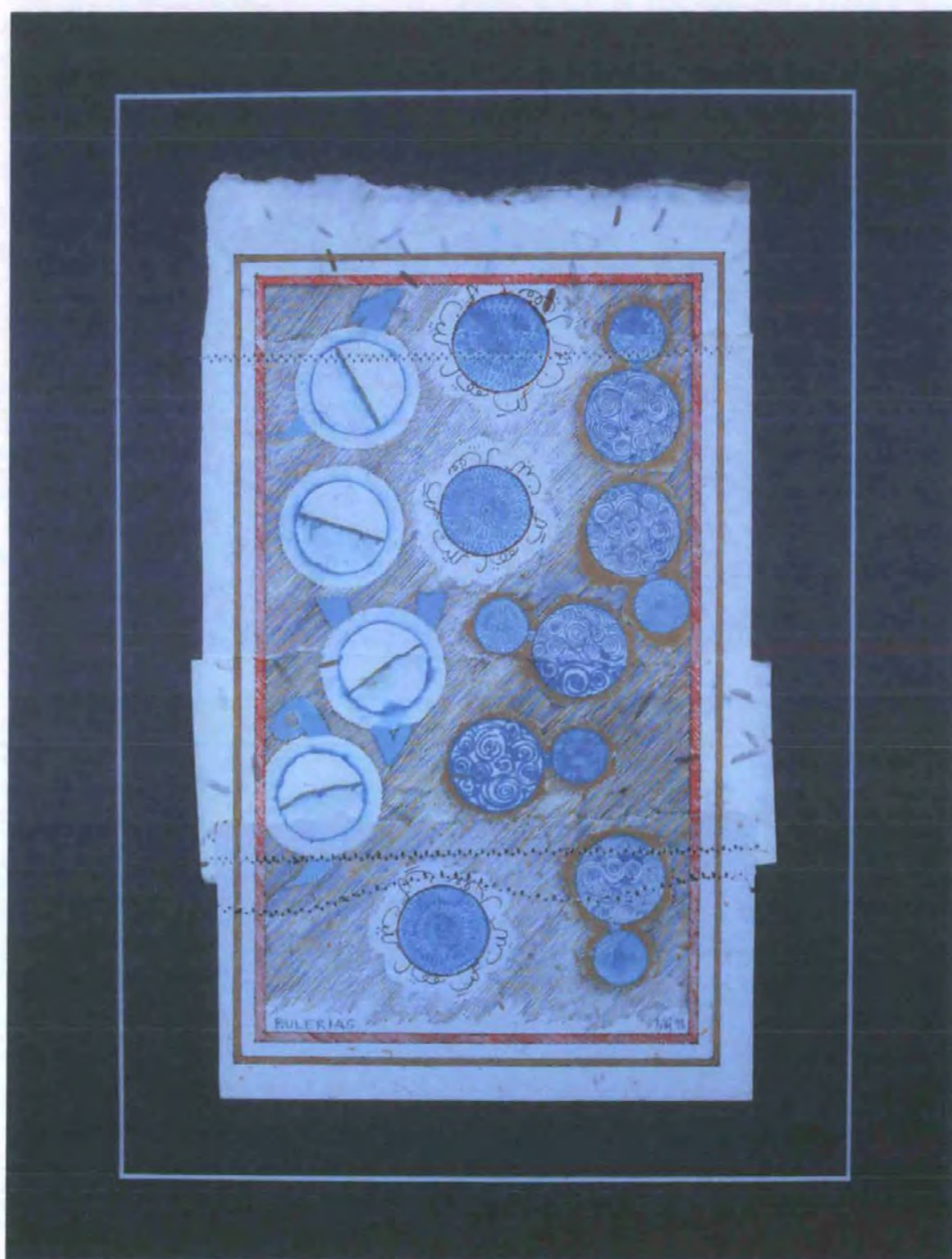


Illustration 23

*Plate XIII*



**Bulerias (July '98)**

*52cm X 62cm*

*Ink, cotton on handmade paper*



**Bulerias**

*In the beginning was the word (sound)*

This piece was an attempt to find a visual way of illustrating the complicated clapping rhythms of the *Bulerias*; a Flamenco dance. I had just been on tour with the Flamenco group of Southern Spain and I was amazed by the contrasting and ever-changing rhythms. It was difficult for them to explain their knowledge so I sketched a bar diagram of beats (seen below) and asked them to put crosses in the boxes when a clap occurred. A basic Bulerias rhythm is then layered with variations on a basic pulse depending on how many hands are clapping other kinds of rhythm. In the finished art work, I used circles to represent the clapped beats and the continual pattern of rhythms and the turns in the dance movements. The divided circles are representational of one beat which is divided into halves as a way to show the timing. I have also shown rhythmic variation by altering the size of the circles and the patterns within each. Each like-design denotes the same, i.e., crotchet, quaver, minim.

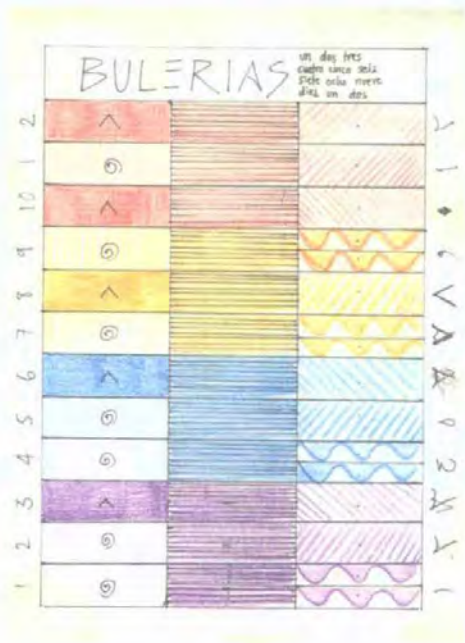


Illustration 24

Flamenco rhythm is somewhat unpredictable. It is non-atrophied, that is to say, it isn't even decided upon, prior to the performance of one song to the next. It is dependent upon the musicians and their feelings, so the rhythms can't always be notated. They are felt and held within the body and its form of expression, like the pulse of blood coursing through the veins. They replicate many of the tonal patterns of oration and speech.

This work encapsulates a large amount of Flamenco's cultural heritage, not just the explanation of rhythm as a musical component, but also as a tempo within the lifestyle within the culture; in fact the two are almost impossible to separate.

The following is an account of the daily rhythms I experienced when I lived with a traditional Flamenco family in Murcia. Rhythm is in every aspect of life. Rhythm moves patterns and creates flow in writing; it punctuates language and can create humour and drama. Rhythm is the beating heart, the blood in the veins, the pace of daily existence. Rhythm is the thread which sews everything together and co-joins and parallels us with the rhythm of the universe.

Waking up to the sound of talking between neighbours; the coffee was being made downstairs; cupboards opening, tea-spoons ringing in the cups. Mother shouts to her youngest son 'Carlos, quieres pescado?' She refers to lunch and asks if he wants fish. She clatters up the stone stairs, her slip-on house shoes slapping each step. The curtains are pulled open and the wrought-iron grilles are unlocked to allow access to the windows. She gets ready to go to the shops to buy fresh groceries for lunch. There is a three-way conversation between her and her son, both of them in the bathroom and they call to her youngest son in bed. Between teeth-cleaning and showering and coffee drinking, there is a minimum amount of listening, and too much shouting and overlapping talk to make sense of much of it.





Illustration 25

Smoked salt fish hanging in a general store in Murcia, Spain.

The mother goes out. Clattering the shopping trolley down the steps outside, she calls back up to make sure that there wasn't anything else that they wanted.

The Flamenco practice begins. Three hours of scales and repetitions of musical phrases, bits of songs and compositions in the making. A constant drone of mumbling comes up from the basement; another son is learning the cases for his law exams and repetition is the theme! In another room another son is practising his Flamenco rhythms on a *cajon*, which is a wooden box-like drum. He plays along to recorded music. Dad comes in from his morning walk. He shouts to find out who is in the house and what they are doing. They are all practising something and so he is happy. He starts practising his own guitar but falls asleep on the sofa in the room full of photos and Catholic icons. His heavy breathing is like a slow ceiling fan on a hot afternoon.

Rafael's girlfriend rings the bell and comes in. She's early, so she puts the TV on and watches some programme which involves many local people parading in Roman outfits. Mother is home. Breathless, she unpacks the shopping from the

bags. She begins the chopping and scraping of the vegetables; scooping out the flesh of the tomatoes and grating the onion. The preparation starts around mid-morning and lunch is a big family event which happens at one o'clock. The day has a distinct split. Morning is ended as the long lunch begins. The afternoon begins at around 4pm.

Each person has their own individual meal prepared. The TV in the kitchen is also on and the table talk is extremely heated and blaring. Plates are not placed down but almost thrown. Dishes clatter in the sink as each course is finished. Mother rinses off the plates as the others go and watch the porno channel. It's mother's favourite; she laughs throughout the programme. It's difficult to concentrate on much because two televisions are on, three different lots of Flamenco are being played, a Flamenco student has just turned up and there is a man at the door socialising with the father, speaking in low tones, on male subjects.

Evenings are usually social with lots of talk and laughter from the patio outside. Motorbikes zoom past and cars screech around the corners. A pitch contrast is created by dogs barking. Noise goes on until about midnight. Punctuating the evening sound-scape is the slap-crack of a shoe onto a hard-backed cockroach. Snoring reverberates around the upstairs of the house and the cicadas are in full voice outside, creating a regular rhythm as a backdrop to the less symmetrical sounds of random greetings and cheek-kisses or a late home-coming and a door-slam. The shifts in noise dynamics are similar to the Flamenco syncopations; it isn't gentle on the untrained ear but with familiarity and understanding, an awareness deepens.

Each day has a similar mixture of sound patterns, maybe different in their syncopation, but ever present. Repetition provides the key to accessing Flamenco, just as the repetition of daily life provides a depth and understanding of the culture and customs of the Flamenco tradition.

*The Indian long ago knew that music was going on permanently and that hearing it was like looking out a window at a landscape which didn't stop when one turned away.* <sup>96</sup>

For the uninitiated, the Flamenco rhythm is a law unto itself; it fuses sameness and novelty. The group of tourists enjoying Flamenco want to join in, sway a little perhaps and clap along. It is at this point that the onlooker becomes frustrated and confused because the usual continuous rhythm patterns do not apply. What seems even more confusing upon this realisation is that the Flamenco clapping seems to have no pattern at all - random pauses punctuated by a few odd claps. The most amazing thing is that all the people 'in the know' seem to have some secret information which not only enables them to clap along randomly but often in a contrasting, syncopated rhythm to the next person. It becomes more apparent that counting actions are both seen and unseen, audible and unheard. The stamping and clicking feet of the dancer are often mimicked by a guttural throat clacking which the musicians habitually do. The counting is of the many co-existing rhythms and syncopation. It is typical for the guitarist to be playing the one rhythm, tapping the base beat with his foot and also clinking the syncopation with his tongue whilst tapping a counter beat with his right hand on the body of the guitar.<sup>97</sup> The continuous beat, like any healthy heart rhythm, is slightly unpredictable and periodic. Within the periods of noise or sound there is silence; once expanded, there is then sound within that silence and so on.

It is still often difficult to understand how something such as the repeatable pattern of rhythm can be created out of seeming chaos. It comes as no surprise that the hard metallic sounds of Flamenco come directly from some of the first rhythms which founded the music, the repetitive action of the rhythm of the hammer – from the forge; hammers on an anvil. The Gypsies were generally the blacksmiths of the region, repetitively striking the hot metal, heating it to a

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<sup>96</sup> Kepes, Gyorgy (1966) *Module: Symmetry: Proportion*, Studio Vista Ltd., London. p.18

<sup>97</sup> The Flamenco/Spanish guitar is derived from the Arabic lute to which they added the red fifth string which was said to represent the heart.

malleable form and beating it into shape. When these Gypsies arrived in Southern Spain around 1447, the then Kingdom of Castilla was a mixture of minorities who stuck together. Prisoners, workers and the great Arab mathematicians collaborated with the blacksmiths, inspiring the evolution of Flamenco and rhythm making.

One of the Flamenco guitarists I knew, was writing a new piece of music, and he asked me to help. As he played the new riffs, I had to count the number of beats. The continuous beat was kept by his foot tapping. So I began to count. Instead of each base beat being of even timing it was slightly out of sync 1 and 2 a n d 3 and and 4 and 5 and 6 a n d 7 and. Like the healthy heart-beat, the music was moving to an irregular rhythm, *almost* equidistant but not quite. The heart pulses in a way which enables it to respond to what is happening within the body, for example, exercise, stress or sleep. The rhythms are constantly changing but the beat remains a simple pulse trying to regulate as it responds to all the underlying variational effects upon it. Equally with the rhythm he was tapping with his foot, he was responding to the left hand finding the chords, the right hand plucking the strings and the corresponding rhythms between them.

*...the very act of measuring destroys some of the information we are trying to gather.*<sup>98</sup>

Flamenco has avoided complete description. There is little written about it and it hasn't really traveled well outside of Southern Spain. There may be music recordings or videos of the dance and music, but the complete experience is just that; a complete experience which takes into account culture, history and the felt sense, even the palpable energy of the audience. Fritjof Capra talked about how *Systemic properties are destroyed when a system is dissected into isolated elements*<sup>99</sup> and Flamenco is no exception. The parts left untouched are those

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<sup>98</sup> Seife, Charles (2000) *Zero*, Viking, U.S.A. p.170

<sup>99</sup> Capra, Fritjof (1997) *The Web of Life*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. p.36



which are the most important, those which connect the more readily accessible parts. The rhythm comes from the heart and soul of the performer; it doesn't begin with the clap of the hands or well-heeled shoe on a bare stage; it's much more intrinsic than that, it's a physical sensation arising from within. Identifying some of the common cultural pulses which run deep in Spanish society, are the roots by which Flamenco is more revealed.

The syncopated clapping with spread out fingers and flat palms is typically Arab and is one of the clapping styles seen whenever music is played and dancing takes place. Another style is that of the middle finger and thumb extended and gripping the other palm and then as if the sliding of the hands together is another tonal sound and is used as a down beat. Hand claps and finger snaps are also used to get attention in Spanish culture; they are used as calls and within the Islamic world metaphors regarding fingers and hands are plentiful.



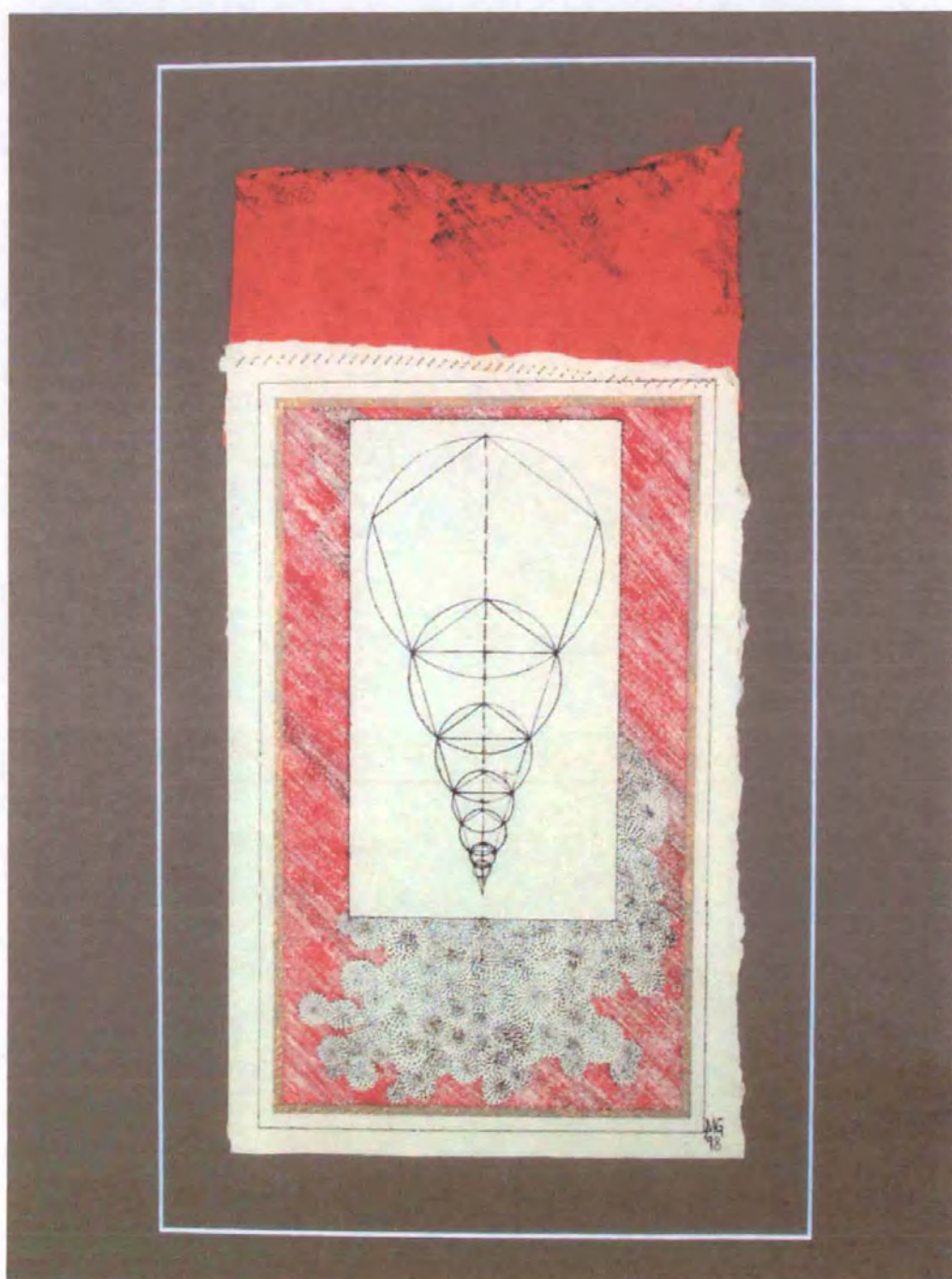
Illustration 26

Newspaper clipping of 2 members of the Pinana flamenco family I lived with in Spain



Within this painting, I show another way of counting and rhythm, but not unlike the ways in which the tourists are unable to access the hidden rhythms in Flamenco. I see that I too, have created an inaccessible form of notation. Flamenco remains so hidden to the uninitiated, that it is only by entering into the culture that the essence of the rhythm is revealed. The above narrative is to give some guide into that culture, and my painting is a departure from that. The form of my work takes on its own meaning, as it not only creates new shapes and notation for the *Bulerias* rhythm, but it also embodies within it (albeit obscured), one of the standard forms of Flamenco itself.

Plate XIV



**Spira (Aug '98)**

49cm X 59cm

*Ink, cotton on handmade paper*

## Spira

*..art and nature are so strongly linked because they have evolved in tandem. If Fibonacci spirals fill our surroundings, will they not come to be encoded into our way of seeing, and hence have the power to guide our sense of proportion in sound or movement as well?<sup>100</sup>*



Illustration 27

Shells were the first tangible part of nature that I could relate to geometry. This drawing, *Spira*, is a simple visual explanation of growth and form, and shows how shells are constructed. There seems to be something very alluring and satisfying about seeing the geometric make-up of forms in nature. It's almost like seeing the blue print or the original design proto-type. The formal demands which growth makes, are shown in each organism as evidence of past growth; as we see the

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<sup>100</sup> Pressing, Jeff & Darryl Reaney (1982) *The Death of Forever*, Longman Cheshire Pty. Ltd., Melbourne. p.188

new shoots on a plant or the twists in an animal horn or the iterating patterns in a piece of broccoli. We see the development of the form, the continuing cycle of change. Symmetrical arrangements remind us of their omnipresence throughout the whole fabric of existence.

*Living organisms ... do not perceive things in terms of isolated elements but as integrated perceptual patterns - meaningful organised wholes.*<sup>101</sup>

Pythagoras once stated that *all things are made of numbers* and geometry stimulates the impulse to count, which is the basis of number. He also said *all is arranged according to number*. For Pythagoreans, number and form, at an ideal level, were one. Centuries later Thomas Taylor reiterated this idea and stated that, *all mathematical forms have a primary subsistence in the Soul*.

*Mathematical relationships seem to express strangely timeless truths, valid everywhere and forever.*<sup>102</sup>

Human beings have lost much of their connection with themselves as an integral part of nature, form and the cosmos. We are not above nature. ... *the whole of man's actual power over nature, depends in the first instance from him having separated himself from Nature.*<sup>103</sup> As we know, nature is not often linear nor hierarchical; such systems are almost the exception. Nature's multiplicity of forms enables it to act periodically in various forms of growth, change and response, and return to the simplest system made up of chaos, self-regulation and equilibrium, which is maintained by equality and balance.

*We are the cosmos. There is nothing in the world which is not in us.*<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Capra, Fritjof (1997) *The Web of Life*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. p.32

<sup>102</sup> Sheldrake, Rupert (1997) *The Presence of the Past*, Harper Collins, London. p.35

<sup>103</sup> Storr, Anthony (1972) *The Dynamics of Creation*, Penguin, England. p.182

<sup>104</sup> RA Schwaller de Lubiz as quoted by Keith Critchlow, (1997) lecture at Buckfast Abbey, Devon.



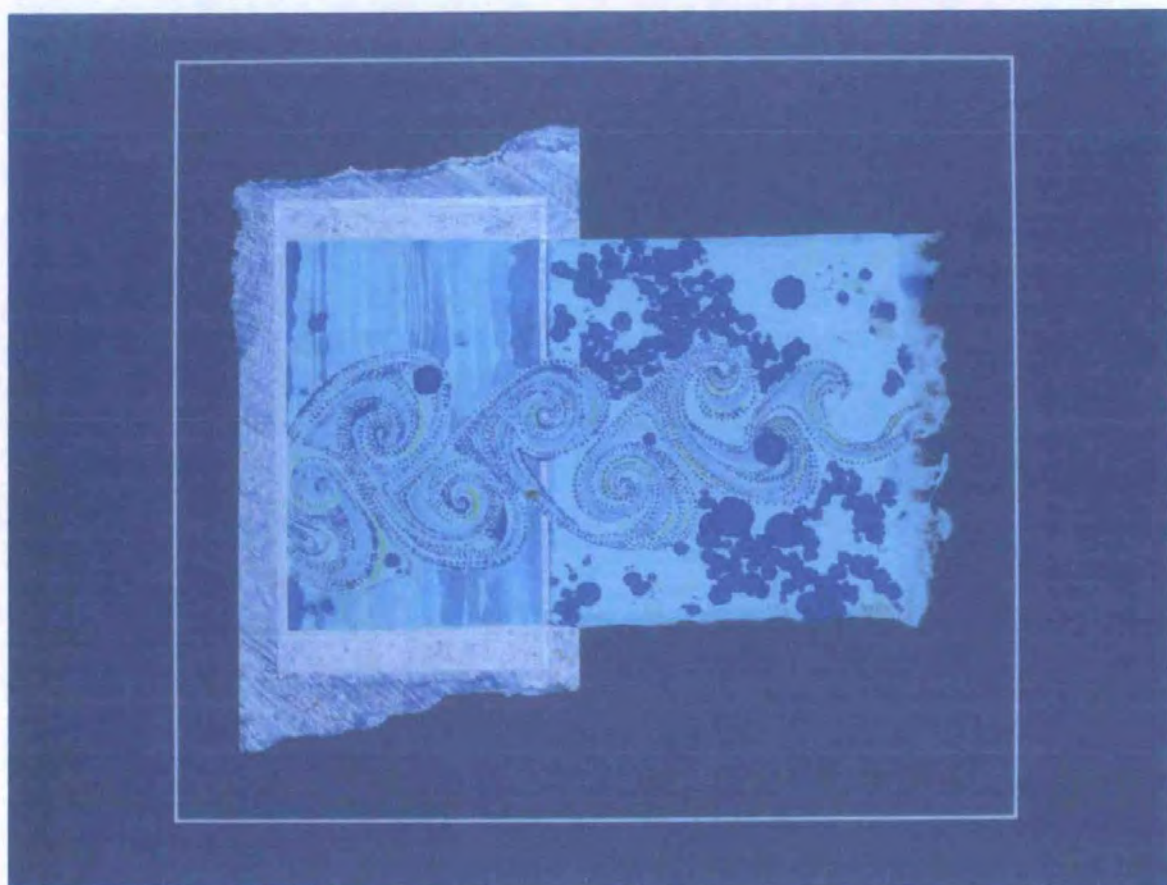


Illustration 28

Making this work was a way of expressing my sense of the simplicity and complexity of nature. This duality is expressed through the two different papers I used; the orange sheet representing the fire and simplicity of the natural cycles within nature itself, and the sage coloured paper being suggestive of the more delicate and complex elements within nature. Using a pointillist technique, I used the repetition of making whorls and circles as a type of calming meditation which enabled me to connect with the nature I was trying to represent. In drawing something using only lines and construction marks, by which I mean leaving the measurement marks and penciled outlines visible, I intended to reveal the complex mathematics and precision in something considered so common place and simple as a shell. The golden mean geometry in the structure of shells is alluded to in this work. I feel that in both the detail and the space of lines on the paper, a sense of both simplicity and complexity is apparent.



*Plate XV*



**Escape from a Mathematical Construction (June '98)**

*52 cm X 62 cm*

*Ink on handmade paper*

## **Escape from a Mathematical Construction**

### **The Moon and the Sea**<sup>105</sup>

*Waves broke.*

*Awareness rose again*

*and sent out a voice.*

*It always happens like this.*

*Sea turns on itself and foams:*

*with every foaming bit*

*another body, another being takes form.*

*And when the sea sends word,*

*each foaming body*

*melts immediately back to ocean breath.*

*Thanks to my beloved friend Shams 'I Haqq, Sun of Truth!*

*Without his strength,*

*I couldn't see the moon,*

*I couldn't become the sea.*

The construction rules I initially set up for this first series, were around the Persian traditional art form of drawings within a set border. I placed these limitations on my art work but here I allowed the image to bleed through the perimeters. The ink drawing shows how water behaves when it is pushed through a restricted opening. The restriction in this case is my border, my limitations. There is a real sense of both freedom and restriction within this piece. The defined boundaries are directly opposed to the round and swirling patterns but moreover the way in which the even the papers are both horizontal and vertical, gives a sense of opposition and divergent forces, undercurrents and

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<sup>105</sup> Douglas-Klotz, Neil (1995) *Desert Wisdom*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. P.151 Rumi, Mevlana Jelaluddin, *The Diwan of Shams-I-Tabiz 13<sup>th</sup> century Anatolia (Persian)*

tensions. The gentle curves of paint belie the struggle, also at play within the painting; just as lapping waves and bubbling fountains conceal the utter power and ferocity of water. The pale colours contradict the force suggested by the 'breaking free' of the constructed boundaries.

As in a number of my works where I use Arabic text, the writing reads from right to left; here also the waves or water formations go in the same direction. From the right hand side of the painting, the smaller curves are showing how water, blown through a straw, behaves when it comes into contact with other water. Like *Kufic* writing, the shapes play with the negative space, with grace.

Water, by nature, is without boundaries, limited only by its surroundings and held by external borders. The construction of the Golden mean rectangle, gives way to the power of water. The result of this exploration looks and feels, unintentionally like the more traditional Japanese paintings of waves and Tsunami, which can be seen in the softness of the tones and the layering of pigments.

*As a living, natural organism, water is formed and functions according to Nature's laws of geometry and exhibits none of the elements of the straight line, circle and point, the basis of modern mechanical and technological constructs.*<sup>106</sup>

*It seems to be one of the fundamental features of nature that fundamental physical laws are described in terms of a mathematical theory of great beauty and power, needing quite a high standard of mathematics to understand it. You may wonder why nature is constructed along these lines? One can only answer that our present knowledge seems to show that nature is so constructed. We simply have to accept it.*<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Coates, Callum (1996) *Living Energies*, Gateway Books, U.K. p.139

<sup>107</sup> Dirac, Paul A.M. (2001) *Lectures on Quantum Mechanics*, Dover Publications, New York.

Sometimes, in the process of making art work, words spill forth. The text and the painting don't ever seem to connect (if placed side by side, for example) unless I place the text on the actual painting itself; so despite making creative work in tandem, the parallel subject matter seems to exist in very separate realms.

This particular painting seemed 'beyond words' in so many ways because of its apparent 'otherness' and fragility but associations with the endless tides enabled me to allow a stream of consciousness to flow. The ever-present nature of water is captured by a tumbling of words, which encapsulate both the reverence and the mundane in the everyday use of water. Likewise, the quality of the painting suggests something precious and magical about water (which of course is true) but still, we cannot separate it from the everyday, common uses of water.

This relationship begins;

Growing from water,

And in water.

Entering through cascades.

Waters broken.

Baptised.

Bath time.

Paddling pools.

Wet flannel wipes face.

Hose pipe.

Warm soapy water.

Big toe under bath tap feeling temperature run.

Seaside.

Seashore.

Cool forest stream.

Two litres a day.

Long, hot soak.

Quick shower.

Water plants.  
Water dog.  
Wash windows.  
Automatic wash day blues.  
A plumber's livelihood.  
Another cup of tea.  
Eye bath.  
Bed bath.  
Drowning sorrows.  
Worse happens at sea.  
Crocodile tears.  
Waves continue,  
Regardless.



Illustration 29





**The Breath of the Compassionate (Dec '98)**

58.5cm X 48cm

*Ink, watercolour, cotton, foil on handmade paper*

## **The Breath of the Compassionate**

*Every sacred art is ... founded on a science of forms, or in other words in the symbolism inherent in forms.*<sup>108</sup>

Using a more subtle technique, less ink and dark colours and something much more pastel and ephemeral without definite edges surrounding the painting, I used watercolour to paint a repeat Islamic pattern and used silver thread as an expression of line and clarity. I wanted the difference and similarity between the colours to be subtle. I used a Sufi text to highlight the deeper spiritual intentions and to point directly to Islam.

The repetition of fine lines was done as a discipline or meditation during which the task was all-encompassing and time lost meaning. I became consumed by the lines and the endless repetition of doing the same thing for what seemed like a void in time; it was a meditation in itself. I was defining time. With the use of lines, I was also defining space. Notions of 'nothing' and 'something' appeared as I divided up the blank page into minute strips by using black ink. I created pattern, separation, relationship and something with more depth just by drawing lines next to one another in an approximately equidistant fashion. It implied that 'time' had been there; time had been taken to make those marks on the paper; space and time in relationship. The density of the lines, suggest deliberate intention by the repetition and continuity throughout the piece. Being and nothingness are juxtaposed and by their eternal co-existence, suggest infinity.

I was sat on a breezy Queensland verandah on a sunny December day. The wind chimes were complementing the sounds of the ocean and I drew lines; lines after lines after lines. I drew lines for days. This related the process to the subject by illustration; I was practicing a form of release, tranquility and inner stillness. By

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<sup>108</sup> Burkhardt, Titus (1967) *Alchemy*, W Stoddard, Stewart & Watkins, London. p.8

making this work I was experiencing the Breath of the Compassionate as a type of surrender; giving in to the process of time. As with any surrender, it often comes after a struggle or a battle. The battle is seen in the art work as 'arrow-like' silver forms contrasting the softness of the colours on the paper. The metallic shapes, which are a direct copy of part of the pattern, give a new meaning to the shape. There is obvious distinction between the silver material seeming hard and slick, and the soft, leaf-like shapes iterating in the background. It appears that the arrows descend down the page and the gentle greens and pink encroach and engulf the edges of the whole image, bleeding outwards.

There was something very contrasting about drawing freehand, pushing watercolour around a set perimeter and sewing in precise lines with a machine. It revealed the diversity within the unity of the piece and also the diversity in any type of creation which, although becoming whole, is made up of varying patterns and relationships.

*... Pattern involves qualities ... To understand pattern we must map a configuration of relationships.*<sup>109</sup>

I was making direct correlations between the idea of divinity, pattern, universal 'truth' and how that links with geometry as something of the divine. Geometry is normally learned and expressed with two primary instruments, compasses which are symbolic of the heavenly source, and the straight edge, symbolic of rectitude on the earthly plane. Compasses are perceived as the 'heavenly' or transcendent instrument because of their fundamental product, the circle. The circle has the transcendent 'pi' characteristic.<sup>110</sup> The straight edge symbolises the 'rationality' of the straight line which when squared gives area 1, and cubed gives volume 1. *Geo-metria* means to measure the earth. It is mathematical measure, number in space. It was first implemented on the banks of the Nile in Egypt, more than 2000

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<sup>109</sup> Capra, Fritjof (1997) *The Web of Life*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. p.81

<sup>110</sup> Burkhardt, Titus (1967) *Alchemy*, W Stoddard, Stewart & Watkins, London. p.9



years ago. When the river flooded each rainy season, the surrounding area lost the established boundaries of land; the re-establishment of these boundaries was known as geometry.<sup>111</sup> Geometry has become the study of spatial order through the measure and analysis of forms. Geometric diagrams, often hidden from our sensory perceptions, reveal still moments of universal actions and timeless properties. Geometry is an endless interconnected array of forms which are the texture and substance of our living world, our visual experience and also our sensorial and psychological universe.

I found some difficulty with the handmade paper because the irregularity of the shape made the framing become incongruent. The edges were uneven. The borders didn't have any true line. It was at that point that I became more interested in the imperfection rather than the rigidity of making it perfect. Imperfection, as a means to access the places within myself which judge and limit my own potential, was something which offered unlimited scope for compassion, change and flexibility. So, in transferring that initial realisation about defects into physical terms, I became aware that such flaws and imperfections shift and alter, to some degree, the expected outcome or result and make space for something other, something new, and often something interesting.



Illustration 30  
Machine sewn paper patchwork

<sup>111</sup> The beginnings of Egyptian ornamentation were rooted in mathematics, with a sense of abstraction,

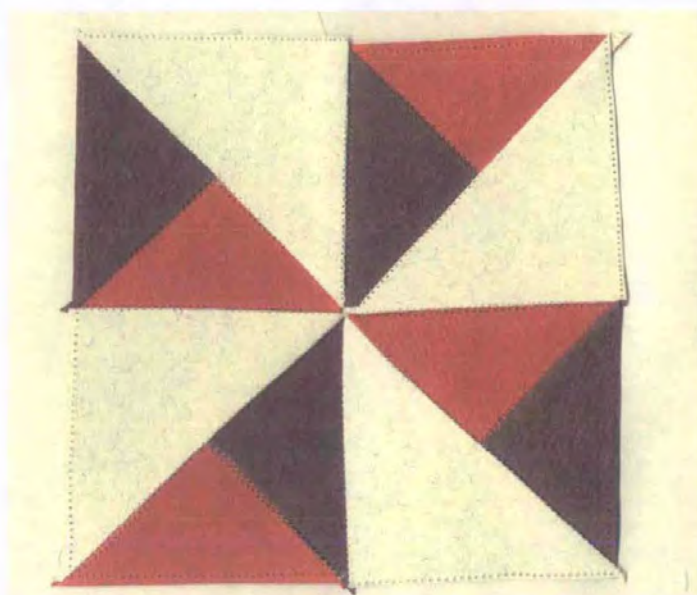


Illustration 31

Machine sewn paper patchwork

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Illustrating the cosmos within an unchanging system.



Plate XVII



**Nothing Vast Enters a Life Without a Curse (June '00)**

48.5cm X 47cm

*Ink, chalk, foil on mixed papers*

## **Nothing Vast Enters a Life Without a Curse**

*Life is never a jest*<sup>112</sup>

Made in Africa, this was inspired by the sand dunes in Soussevlei, Namibia, some of the biggest dunes in the world. I sat in a corrugated iron shed on a wooden bench and made the work from what little materials I had with me. Days before, I had driven for over a week, along red dusty roads in a Land Rover, seeing the expanse of desert stretching into the distance. There were abandoned cars stuck and decomposing in the sand. The dunes seemed so close but it was after walking for over an hour through the shifting sand that I reached the foot of them. It was arduous and frustrating. Climbing up the dune's perfect spine, the wind replaced and smoothed each footstep along the way, and perfection reigned once more. It seemed that with their magnitude and beauty, the dunes were remote, aloof and fixed. Everything both blessed and cursed. This was the last piece made in the series and it became apparent that the work was taking on a new form. I was trying to convey more about feelings of permanence and impermanence and the vastness of life; less about the details and more about a general feelings arising from the contemplation of large-scale forms.

After completing the series of works as documented above, I felt as though I had ended that way in which I was exploring the notions of form and pattern. The initial ideas I had begun to previously discover through oils and acrylics re-emerged. It was almost as though I had started my first exploration of art as an adult with a few paintings and ended with very small detailed drawings, only to find myself full circle all over again; as though I had journeyed to an extreme and completed one way of the creative search. I eventually began to feel constrained by my own, imposed rules, but I wanted to push through the feelings of restriction

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<sup>112</sup> Al Ghitani, Gamal (April 1998) Ibn 'Arabi Symposium, Oxford.

until I felt purged; in itself, a parallel religious notion of suffering, understanding and re-birth!

I noticed that when I made this series of works, there was a bound and pressured feeling that as I began making the fine lines I then had to continue and I could not undo what had been done. I created my own perimeters of suffering. I constructed the rules for these art pieces and found that I was subjected to their dominance. I began to feel constrained and tried to find ways of breaking the rules I set for myself. This is very much a mirror of my own life; creating rules and boundaries to give myself some guidance through life, which I wasn't given as a child. But then the 'old dog, new tricks' aspect finds a way through, and even if it's just a trick of the mind searching for ways to break the rules, there does seem to be a natural persuasion in me that constructs and destroys. This, I think, is the human condition to some extent in everyone. Those fragments which remain after the destruction of boundaries are those things which become individual patterns, our personal status quo, the familiar and the known. What is seen in this piece is the fragmenting and disassociated elements left on the surface of the paper; apparently random and disassociated.

I experienced one of the most dramatic expressions of nature at the dunes in Namibia. I know that nature, outside of ourselves, surrounds us on a daily basis, even in something as everyday as a vegetable or a tree, but the times in my life when I have felt overwhelmed by the vastness of the universe have been in the middle of great, seemingly barren, expanses of land. Standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon, or looking through the red rocks in Arizona across the outstretched land, or driving towards the endless roads of emptiness in Death Valley, or standing on top of the Jebel in Bahrain as the sand blows across the desert floor and the sun sets and then to be a just spec on the edge of the Namib Desert; all such memories evoke the same feeling, that of an uncontrollable vastness. Making art was a way for me to encapsulate the essence of nature; like harnessing one droplet to represent a whole ocean. In the instance of this piece, the writing was an expression of such immense feelings of almost desperate

magnitude that I felt that I could have written and written and never expressed enough, but the words tumbled out and the space dictated the amount. No matter how much I wrote or what I painted, no expression I made could exorcise the sense of the fragility, robustness and precious timelessness of nature.

*There is nothing more timely than the timeless.*<sup>113</sup>



Illustration 32

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<sup>113</sup> Critchlow, Keith (1997) Quote from lecture at Buckfast Abbey, Devon.

## Moving Documentation

Throughout the period of making the art work I was also making a moving documentation of 3 dimensional images. Shot on a variety of cameras over a period of four years, this moving documentation shows images which are visual examples of shape, relationship and connection between natural forms and mans' intervention. The music is Carlos Pinana on guitar, and the voice of his brother Curro Pinana. They were some of the musicians with whom I lived whilst making the majority of the film. The music is on a CD<sup>114</sup> and is based upon a selection of poems of Ibn Al Arabi<sup>115</sup>, adapted to music.

The short filmic documentation looks at the visual relationship between nature, environment and Flamenco. The selection of images show water flow and tides; each wave washing away the first making way for the same but different; waves connecting the sea to the shore, making trace marks in the sand, leaving behind a trace mark, a ghost impression. Each wave, making up an ocean; each drop making up a river; nothing exists without relationship of the one and the many. There is flow from image to image; waterfalls, the flow of skirts in motion and the music as the constant unifier. More than that, the intention was to create a sense and feeling of the heart and energy of Flamenco, something which borders the religious, creative, historical, cultural, multi-faceted dimensions of life as the essence and core which is the source of the expression.

The musical language of Flamenco is one which really speaks to me; it is emotional, raw, heart-felt and cross cultural, marrying complexity of rhythm with direct expression. It is the only music which represents my cultural background, my deepest feelings and encompasses as much of my inner world as possible. I hear the Muslim call to prayer, the Latin passion, the deep sorrow and the sounds of generations past. I can feel history when I hear the music. The music

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<sup>114</sup> *De Lo Humano Y Lo Divino*, RTVE Musica, Caja de Ahorros del Mediterraneo, Spain.

<sup>115</sup> Ibn Al Arabi was a Sufi mystic who was born in Damascus and died in Spain.



isn't tame and doesn't make excuses for itself. The quality of earth and metal is evoked, as is total expression of the voice and the body as a single instrument.

Flamenco is Hispano-Arabic music which is immediately recognised by falling cadences, complicated arabesques; infinite gradations of pitch; repetitions of the same note, the multiplicity of conflicting rhythms and a frequent metallic tone (because the tonal system employs what is known as an imperfect cadence). The metallic dryness of the sound is a typical link with Indo-Arab music. Instead of the more familiar acoustic scale D E F# G A Bb, (what we refer to as the Phrygian scale which is Am G F E) but here the supertonic, within variations, frequently functions as a leading tone. It should be noted that quarter tones are often used which are not in the Phrygian scale. According to the *Flamencistas*, Flamenco specialists who 'live' Flamenco, the three most widely used scales are the major, natural minor and the Andalusian<sup>116</sup> scale which is like what analysts have described as Phrygian. The Andalusian scale is an eight note scale with a raised third – E F G (ascending) G# (descending) A B C D E.



Illustration 33

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<sup>116</sup> Andalusia is derived from the Arabic word Al-Andalus, one translation being 'to become green after a long summer or drought'. This certainly was true of the phase when Muslims ruled Spain.

The music is thought to be a fusion of Byzantine church chants, the music of Jews, the Arab invaders, Berbers of North Africa, and the Gypsy bands which arrived in Southern Spain in the fifteenth century thought to have originally come from Indo-Pakistan. The Spanish Gypsies claim Flamenco as their own heritage. Due to the various stories about the original roots of the Gypsies, blood tests have come the furthest in proving that they are of North Indian descent, although there are many stories about their descent from the royalty of Egypt, hence 'E-gypsy'. The Southern Spanish Gypsies are small-boned and dark with long features. When I first went to the Flamenco gatherings or walked the small streets of Cartagena in Murcia, I saw small dark people who I thought were Indian. I was surprised to see them because the area isn't cosmopolitan and there aren't tourists. In the Flamenco competitions there is a big divide and great rivalry between the *Paysanos* and the *Gitanos*; very reminiscent of the 'Jets' and the 'Sharks' in *West Side Story*. The Spanish are a dark race but the Gypsies are much darker and have a distinctive hair style which is like a trademark. The hair is coarse and wavy, short at the front, long at the back. The men tend to be small and over-weight and the girls are usually at home, unless of course they are dancing.

Images of the dancers were taken at the school in Murcia, Spain, and at competitions and performances in Madrid and Valencia. The dancers were advanced students or professional dancers rehearsing or preparing for exams. The professional show in Madrid was part of large theatrical production of Flamenco and open to the general public. I was privileged to witness the rehearsals of the professionals but more than that I was taken to the very private world of old underground Flamenco. The after-midnight, basement venue in Murcia, was a real enclave of 95% men most of whom were in their 60's and older. This was a closed circle of *Flamencistas* who had been gathering since the banishment of Flamenco during Franco's reign. I was very fortunate to know the musicians who enabled me to enter into and record that secret world. The big competitions were in a similar vein, people in the know were there, everyone else

was oblivious. The competitions were very late night events in large and rough auditoriums or county halls. The gypsies and the non-gypsies were distinct factions. It had a very serious tone; there was shouting and cursing and potential fights about to erupt.

The beginnings of Flamenco are said to have come from the need to express issues of importance, either political or personal difficulties. The singing voice travels further than the spoken voice, so it is the ideal way to transmit information. Initially this was what constituted Flamenco, *cantes a palo seco* or dry songs. The word *cante* meaning song, comes from the word chant and *cantaor* meaning singer is directly translated as cantor. Like the muezzin in the Mosque as he calls to prayer, *cantes a palo seco* is a lone voice. Through the Flamenco tradition, connections can be directly made with Islamic Spain. Flamenco is a hybrid of cultures and history. Like any other imbued tradition, the depth of the event is not easily accessible to the outsider and in order to put the experience in context, many of the cultural, social and locational aspects have to be re-discovered and incorporated into the experience of Flamenco. One of the most challenging aspects to understanding Flamenco is that there is so little written about it, and the musicians and dancers who have been living it are quite poor at giving adequate explanations. In fact, many of the people I spoke to about the significance of certain elements of Flamenco didn't want to talk about it at all, preferring to experience and live it.

Generally, esteemed Flamenco singers and guitarists come from family dynasties of Flamenco greatness where more than just technical knowledge is passed down. The first step in this process of learning is to learn how to *really* listen. They say that knowing how to listen is the most difficult art. The attuned ear becomes used to the half step up and the lack of resolve and the complex rhythm patterns, and the musician learns to use this familiarity creatively.

When I was attending a Flamenco master class and learning to create the vocal sounds of traditional singing, the class was all seated in a circle. We each had to make the sound 'Aaaaaaiiiieeee' and then the teacher walked behind each of us and with a sudden jerk, grabbed hair and pulled the head backwards. The result was a typical beginning of a Flamenco song, a painful cry of 'AAAAIIIEEEEEEOO'. The end of the sound is snapped back as though it is swallowed. It really was no surprise to note that my first experiences of Flamenco made me cry, the singers also cry during performances. It seems that being able to truly let go of the sound can free up emotions that have been buried in the body and the unconscious. Some of those tears express sorrows of this lifetime and also those of ancestors' sadness passed through the ages.

The Cante Jondo style is a classic example of the saying which often accompanies the undivided art and culture of the region, '*tiene la alegria de estar triste*' that is to say, that they rejoice in being sad! On the subject of the intense verbal expressions of the singer, an old cantor Manuel Centeno said, '*When you write of our songs, do not forget to say that in them you heard the sound of weeping.*'

Frederico Garcia Lorca did so much to promote Flamenco as a foundation of Spanish nationality. He wrote astutely of the traditional Cante Jondo, the most pure and difficult style representing the most ancient roots of cultural music:

*See for yourselves the transcendental quality of 'cante jondo' ... it is deep ... deeper than the present heart that composes it or sings it, because it is almost infinite. It comes from distant races, crossing the cemetery of the years and the leaves of the shrivelling winds, born of the first cry ...*

It is from the experience of seeing Flamenco that one has the sense that what is being witnessed is not just a performance for the sake of banal exhibitionism, but something which is even beyond the knowledge and experience of the

performers. Not unlike certain types of trance practices, the musicians appear to embody something greater than themselves. There seems to be a loss of self in the creativity, a union of body and Soul in a spiritual exercise. At the beginning of each song, the singer (cantor) mouths a few sentences in silence, a brief tuning up, almost an internal discussion. All the practice and rehearsing can never totally prepare the singer for the improvised nature and complexity of Flamenco. The spontaneous patterns of sound and rhythm arrive and depart through the vessel of the performer. The singer cuts through the personal to the collective unconscious. He is often destroyed by the experience of the song which overrides his conscious self. Typically exhausted and broken by the experience of singing, it is as though the cantor has undergone an initiation process.

This is more than an empty show for the sake of tourism. True Flamenco performance is akin to becoming an empty vessel for the emotions and expressions to pour through, using the self as an instrument and the heart as the sculptor of sound. Seeing the desperately contorted faces and bodies of the singers as they sing with such conviction and passion, leads the non-accustomed observer to believe that what is being witnessed is other than just a song. The whole self seems to be taken over by the twists and turns of reverberations and vibrations. The idea of trance and a departure of rational self is witnessed in the various strands of Flamenco performance. Not only the dancers, but also the singers slap their bodies in a manner not far removed from the trance dancing seen in many ancient cultures. The music, both singing and instrumentation, builds to a crescendo which creates an energy of immense power. Difficult to describe, but almost tangible in experience, the building of the rhythm and intensity is compelling and alluring to all involved. Such qualities are associated with trance and altered states which have a hypnotic effect. The intimacy and responsiveness between the performers is needed to draw out the *duende* (Soul) between the dancer, singer and musician, expressing dynamic cultural properties.



*Flamenco ... belongs to the sphere of the sacred ... is concerned with ritual and with the celebration of life.*<sup>117</sup>

Throughout the making of the video I had to be sensitive to the dancers and musicians. Flamenco is not like most other music, it has an intensely private, spiritual, confessional quality. When the old men sang, they improvised about their lives, their pain and heart aches. Flamenco is always personal and I needed to be aware that my recording could be deemed as invasive. Flamenco is thought of as spiritual, political and instrumental but the body is central to the song. The rhythms and patterns, of and in, the body and the voice, and the hands on the strings are physical manifestations of the music.

Forms akin to arches and specific angles are shown by the dancing body which patterns its space with multi-syncopated rhythms, using both the heels and palms. The body defines space in both vertical and horizontal, with sound occupying the third dimension. The patterns created are of something beyond the obvious notion of decoration. These patterns can be read as inherent movements and shapes within forms of the body.

*... particular forms in decorative art can suggest a significance beyond that of aesthetic conventionality, and would seem to indicate a subconscious awareness of important natural principles.*<sup>118</sup>

To look at the dance and the dancer, which are inseparable, we have to create a different set of possible representations and interpretations. Flamenco dance is not about the promotion of girls as passive objects. Women wear figure-accentuating dresses which 'kick out' at the hips and cling to the curves of the torso. Old women are considered to be just as able as the young dancers. This is unlike ballet or other classical dances which prefer young performers. Flamenco

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<sup>117</sup> Parra, Antonio (April 1998) The Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Symposium Concert, Oxford.

<sup>118</sup> Wade, David (1991) *Crystal and Dragon – The Cosmic Two Step*, A Resurgence Book, U.K. p.209

earns respect with age, soul and wisdom. The way in which the woman seems to represent flow and fluidity, the traditional and frequently worn red dress suggests heart symbolism, blood and passion; displaying the fullness of their skirts in flow, like waves and water vortices. In this manner of perception the man is more earthed, remaining more fixed in his movements. He is the sand, the arena in which the male energy excites the bull and produces the dance, the energy and the flow of blood; proud, animated and fearless. This is similar in Middle Eastern cultures, especially displayed at weddings. Men line opposite sides of a long red carpet and they drum a variety of contrasting rhythms. The women are abandoned and free, they dance like dervishes, often making periodic high pitched tongue 'screams'. The men are the container providing the forum and the women are the excited, kinetic energy.

Spliced in between the dancing images are short samples from nature and Islamic architecture. These provide imagistic reference points and allow the imagination to make visual leaps between water movements, geometry and body actions. These are primarily a series of images to enable the mind to dance between pictures of unconnected but inextricably linked subjects and phenomena.

As in the body of the text where I have included diary excerpts, thought and feelings, I have also interjected myself into the film. The footage in the film is from a performance I did on religion, expression and language. And a second part of that footage is around the same time. I wanted to juxtapose the profane with the sacred, the poetic and beautiful with somewhat unrelated jarring images. This was a way of, not only representing many aspects of life such as the imperfections, but also a visual notion of disconnectedness and relatedness concurrently, that which we struggle with on a personal basis.

## Second Series

### IN TRANSIT: Points of Contact

*A human is too complex to be taken in whole, to be seen in all his parts, to be assessed in the moment.*<sup>119</sup>

I look at the work I made for the first series and it's not dissimilar to looking at photos of myself in the early eighties, recognisable but younger, more obvious and naive. I have a sense of being more independent of relevant learnings and my work continues to reflect that, taking on a style completely unto and of itself. Likewise with the earlier art work, I feel a detachment already. In a much earlier series of paintings, I remember needing to write on all my art-work for fear that it might be misinterpreted and the viewer might not understand what I wanted to convey. That was ten years ago. Now there is rarely any writing and when there is it is usually in Arabic or a foreign language. The use of a foreign language is two-fold; if the script isn't the Western alphabet, I like to use the curves and shapes of another alphabet as a type of pattern or additional shape within the painting. It doesn't matter if the viewer understands what is written, but it is important to me that when I choose a word or words, they have direct relevance to the piece. If I use a Western text, but write in a foreign language, then my intention is usually to tell about something but keep a part of that information less accessible. I no longer need the painting to be 'understood' in my terms. The work I make is now sufficient and not only are less words on the painting necessary but also less words written about the actual painting seem to suffice; all the expression and dialogue is within the form itself.

The *self* is shifting, growing outwards from the core, and upon reflection I can see how the beginning of this was like an epiphany and a revelation of the woven gossamer threads underlying the life I perceived. I was in ecstatic states having

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<sup>119</sup> Prather, Hugh (1977) *Notes on Love and Courage*, Doubleday & Co. Inc., New York.

opened a door to the possibility of infinite connections in the cosmos. I have spent years trying to get back to that moment to find some proof that a 'truth' exists. In that journey, I made art work to express those discoveries. I feel as though I 'peeled off' a layer of art. What I am doing now feels closer to the core and less of an outer layer, but no doubt that is partly because I am *now*, and the future will enable me to look back and perhaps assess it differently.

This second series of work is oil and acrylic painting, based loosely on geometry, is much more unplanned and spontaneous than the first series when I had a much more defined set of rules and subject matter with which I wanted to convey more of the scientific or quantum properties of construction in nature or architecture. The geometry is a starting point over which layers of paint hide many of the marks. I use rollers and a palate knife to apply the paint in a liberal manner. This method enables me to allow a sense of greater unfolding in the work, with less control from my mind, making it more dynamic and physical. The rhythm of shapes on the canvas, seem to lead the eye deeper into the texture of the work. By using circles and their segments, and by obscuring parts of the forms at (seemingly random) intervals, there is a sense of multiple layers of circles receding and advancing. Texture is created by the opacity of some of the colours. The work can easily be read as chaos over form, function and order. Through the layers of colour some semblance of order emerges, or order is being engulfed by turbulent chaos. Either way there is struggle and contrast at play. We paint from and about ourselves and I am sure either description is a fitting assessment of my-Self from the inside, out. As the series develops, the complexity of shapes and colours fades into simplicity and more stillness. This was not an intentional act but part of a natural and a more spontaneous progression. In the first paintings, I used more colours and a more dense use of overlapping shapes.

In the process of painting and writing about the journey of the *self*, the *self* journeys; it moves forward and reflects, discards, grows, creates and sometimes

repeats without sense or conscious reflection. As I continue to evolve and grow, I still hold fast to an anchor deep within, (that which is known as Spirit). In the time taken to embark upon and go through this process I have loved and left, loved and lost, loved and let go. I have traveled continents and 'moved mountains'; I have traversed mountains and moved across continents. I have sung with people around the world, I have eaten with Bushmen, I have fallen in front of cars, I have walked across deserts, I have made big desserts for birthdays<sup>120</sup>, I have been found out, I have been an illegal immigrant, I have lived with families of others, I have found out about my own family, I have run fast and I have crawled on hands and knees, I have realized more about who this *me* is. This *me* is spartan, monastic in life, voyaging in body, Soul and mind. This *me* is open, sometimes too open, it loves seaweed and roasted almonds. And so it goes on. The paintings become a visual diary of development and of contrast, as I realise that all I do not identify with, is also very much who I am.

*Circle is time, it's all, the breath of life*<sup>121</sup>.

The main themes of this series are grids, circles, geometry, *kufic* writing and layers hiding layers. The grids are not measured but dividers of unequal space; shapes which are very uneven. Squares and rectangles which look as though they have been drawn by children without a ruler are what result from not having measured lines to follow. I find that the whole of NYC, where I live, is a constant series of grids; street-blocks, car lots, rooms, spaces, restaurant table configurations and patches of sky separated by the buildings. The grids in the paintings have become like a loose structure for me to hang the rest of the painting upon.

The other technique which I employ to make the painting cohesive is to finally submerge the finished work in layers of paint. Using a roller, I bury the clear

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<sup>120</sup> I find myself making birthday deserts for friends. No recipe and always a number of melted Mars bars on top of it; it always looks like a martian moon rock stuck with Smarties and gloop!

<sup>121</sup> Sutra 6



images under patches of colour. This gives me the feeling of secrecy and privacy, as though I can allow the painting to be free until the last minute when I partially obscure it. It requires that the viewer looks harder and longer to see the small nuances of lines and marks partially hidden within the painting. The splash-like marks on the canvas began because of a canvas which I was given, which had already been used. I couldn't cover over the splash-marks with the paint, since they were too dark and prominent. So, I incorporated the marks and found that I liked the way in which the unpredictability of the lines gave the paintings dynamic movement and contrast with a fixity of grid lines on the canvas. In some paintings there are splashes raised up off the canvas by using thick oil paint and then the grid is initially gauged out of the paint in relief; random excavations of the paint and canvas. I respond to the texture and landscape of the forms on the canvas as well as the forms painted onto the flat surface; these are both multi-dimensional aspects within the painting; the actual physical relief and also the visual dimensions.

The increased awareness and ability of self-reflection is what makes this creative process more tangible. The analysis of the art work is yet another layer of subjective writing, as it, like the work before it, comes through the personality filter<sup>122</sup> and the understanding of the artist. Being objective is like trying to separate *self* from *self*. I have done my utmost to be as clear and multi-dimensional as I can in all the work. I don't see 'the work' as some paintings or some text, but a whole internal process which has a multi-sensory output through different media, one of which being the way in which each day of life is lived. How can the life experience not affect the creative process, and visa versa? Georgia O'Keefe said that she had to try and get along with her divided self the best she could. I think most people have that division or multiple divisions.

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<sup>122</sup> The personality filter is that individual system we each have which uses past experiences, preference, genetics, learned response (both cultural and social) and feelings with which to make any work, say anything or react. The essence of the soul and spirit is that which comes from a 'universal' quality of 'beingness'; it is before and beyond the constraints of the incarnation of a specific lifetime and is eternal beyond the restraints of understanding. Enlightenment is the attainment of that which is free from the self/the personality and is present within the wisdom of the soul and spirit.

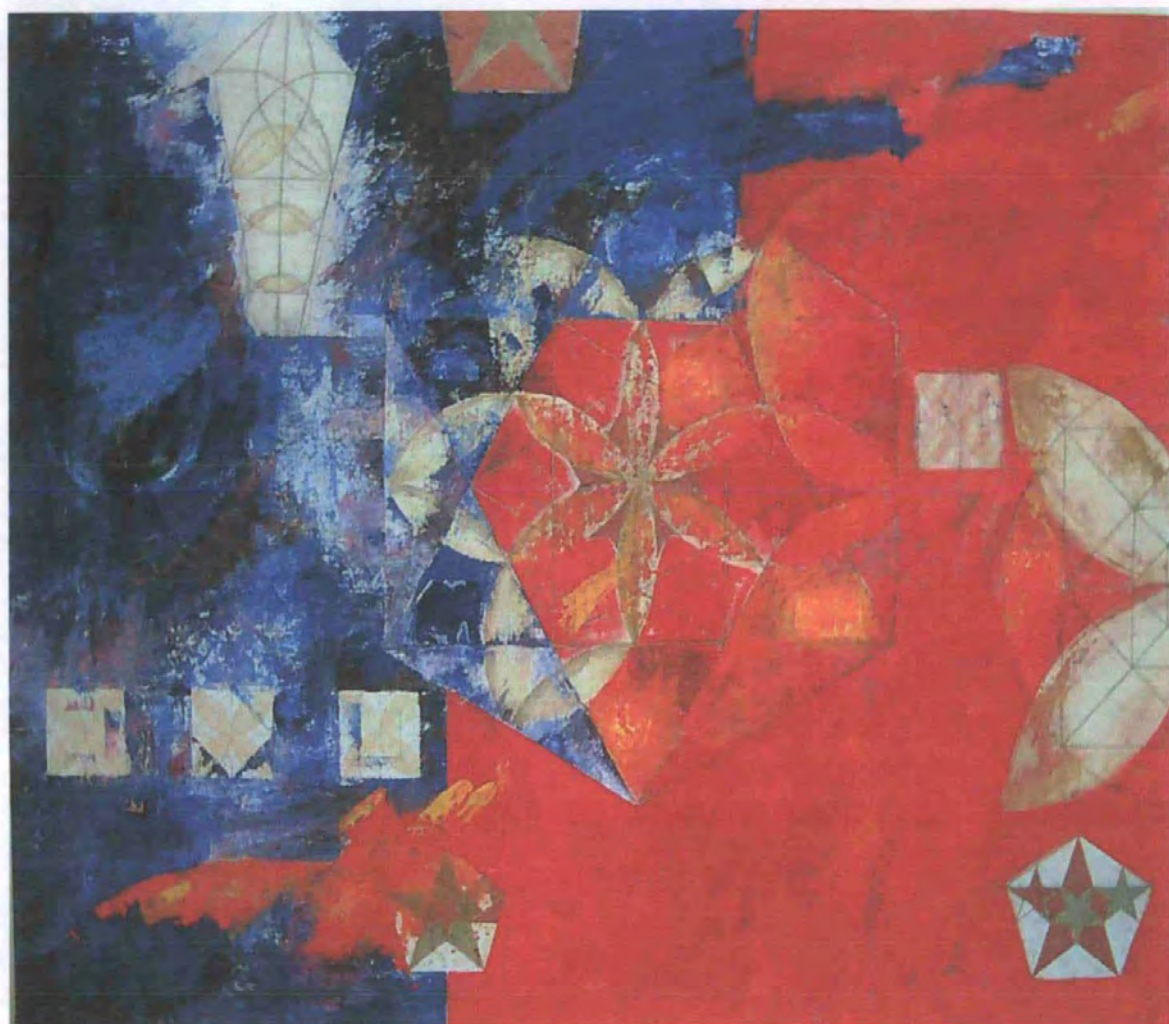
Finding ways in which those aspects can co-exist in a non-destructive way, is why creativity is a place of convergence and exorcism of thoughts, feelings and ways of peeling off (or sometimes adding on) the layers of *self*.

*If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.*<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Blake, William (1961) *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, University of Miami Press, U.S.A.

*Plate XVIII*



**Revelation**

122cm X 95cm

*Oil, acrylic, chalk on canvas*

## **Revelation**

### **The Past Flies Away**<sup>124</sup>

*The past flies away,  
coming months and years do not exist:  
Only the pinprick of this moment  
belongs to us.*

*We decorate this speck of a moment - time -  
by calling it a flowing river or a stream.*

*But often I find myself alone  
in a desert wilderness,  
straining to catch the faint echo of  
unfamiliar sounds.*



Illustration 34

<sup>124</sup> Shabistari, Mahmud 13<sup>th</sup> Century Persian Sufi Poet *The Secret Rose Garden*



In relation to this first painting it seems appropriate to quote this Sufi poem, which suggests, 'revelation' is available to us in the moment, with ourselves and in stillness. It was in such moments that I was able to comprehend the deeper meaning of what I created (much later than the actual point of creation). This painting was my first experience considering and studying geometric forms and number in my art.

This painting was started in 1992, and has been on 2 different stretchers. It has traveled continents and been moved around numerous times. The completion of the painting happened this year; as though this piece was the outer perimeter of the circle encompassing the whole body of work. In retrospect, I realise that it was as though this painting was on hold until I could create additional pieces. It was the very first painting I made using geometry, a palate knife and oils within the same work. It has been through minor re-paintings and the removal of the words, but the initial idea and basic forms in the painting remain. I re-painted parts of it just to consolidate the areas which were left empty when the words had been removed. I have resisted doing a complete re-working of the piece, as it serves as a documentation and point of departure from where I started in the process of making paintings using geometry in this particular style.

I was examining the geometry of shells and trying to be bold and not involve writing and visual details, although initially I made small pieces of writing on acetate and stuck them on to the canvas. The contrasting colours were strikingly powerful, almost aggressive for me at the time. I recall that this particular work was a culmination of a few things; the inspiration that I felt when I learned about creating complex geometric drawings at The Slade; the wonder that nature was made of geometry, which seems obvious now but felt surprising then, and this art work was also my attempt at a very constructed and conscious structure. I was focused upon the placement of line and shape on the canvas and the way in which the colours had relationship with each other.



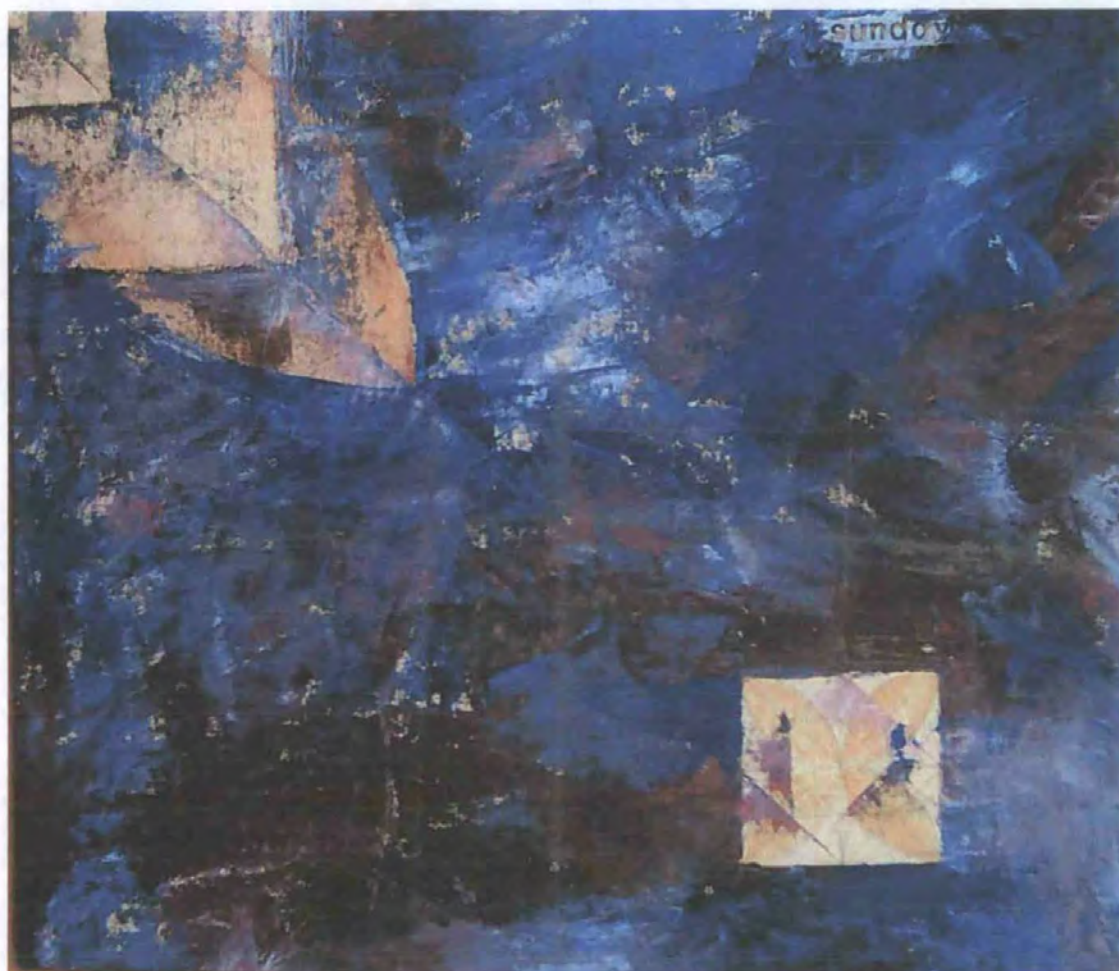
Small boxed areas depict geometry as though in isolation from the rest of nature. This kind of compartmentalisation has been since integrated into my work. But without altering the essential painting I wanted to show how much the ideas within my painting, have emerged over the years. The isolation of the geometry was a direct link to my relationship with it. I was tentative, and it was very compartmentalized. I am also aware of the distinct divided halves of the painting; so much duality and non-integration. That is not to say that now all my work and myself is integrated. Now, at least I am aware of the divides and fragmentation. The fragments are the various sensibilities (personal traits and behaviours) which have evolved in tandem with myself from experiences in different countries and in different situations. The divided self is that which grew up with parents in different countries in opposing economic and social situations, with distinct religions and varying values. The distinct differences are like the bold and flat red colour and the mottled blue and purple side of the canvas. Sometimes the colours crossover as one colour juts out into the other, and in some places the two colours touch but each are very separate, divided by the line between them. This parallels how my worlds so rarely collided but lived side by side, in opposition.



Illustration 35



*Plate XIX*



**Blue Appendage**

50.5cm X 44cm

*Oil, acrylic, chalk on canvas*

## **Blue Appendage**

This small square painting was originally part of the previous canvas *Plate XVII*. It jutted out on the bottom right hand corner of the earlier painting. I cut it in two, making this painting a small square in which the painting image seems to dominate the canvas (unlike the other, in which the images are surrounded by some expanse of one untouched colour and therefore seemingly 'space'). I then had both paintings stretched separately and later had to cut them both off the canvas to transport and store them. I cut these pieces in two because as I began to formulate the ideas for the painting, even before the canvas was stretched, the material was such an irregular shape. As I began to draw, I realised that the image could continue to be connected, even if it was on two separate canvases. I was tentative about and initially reluctant to cut the canvas. This blue square has consequently become its own piece of work rather than a part of the previous painting. It is almost as though, this is the most segregated or 'cut-off' part of the self; 'joined' at origin but destined to be separated eternally unless there is deep reconciliation and awareness. By this I mean, there are parts of our personalities, our DNA, our make-up, which are deep character traits, behaviours, maladies, which we act out without awareness, so we don't understand our behaviour or who we are, but there is an essence and a 'blind-spot' which exists within. Of course there is a visual bond between the two pieces, but each piece also stands alone. This is a close-up of a geometric pattern shown in the smaller details of the previous plate *XVII*, as though the genetic imprint exists in both. Blue and 'gold' dominate the painting. This was the first direct reference I made to Islamic art. It was around this time that I first became aware of the importance of the visual Islamic world and its impact upon me. This coincided with lectures from geometry scholars and I began to make links and connections between mathematics, nature, geometry, architecture and religion.

Making this work was a reflection of my own self as a part of the genetic imprint of my father. I have grown up almost always separate from him, but there is no doubt that we are genetically the same (nature not nurture in this case); same mannerisms, disposition, life patterns and mostly the sense that despite distance and time there is an unspoken bond beyond any other relationship. Similarly, the fact that this painting and its larger original, have been separated since the first weeks they were painted nevertheless, I still think of them as part of the same thing. I am aware that they are independent, but I associate the same feelings and thoughts to both pieces as the two paintings originated together. The leaf-like shape in this painting is like the skeleton of a leaf found at the end of autumn. (This was painted in September in London when I found half a leaf which had rotted into delicate filigree. I framed it and it still hangs in my bathroom). This image is a representation of structure and form in nature and by showing a simplistic notion of 'leaf', for example, it is somewhat like a blueprint stating that this is the underlying nature of the generic symbol of 'leaf-ness'. That replication of something like the original, is art reflecting life and often showing a different aspect to what we would normally take on face value.

The temptation to re-work this square is something which demonstrates that I have moved on from the place I was in, when I made this work both in an emotional and creative capacity. In some ways it also reveals my desire to erase the documentation from that period in time, to release myself from that particular feeling, or moment. I can remember vividly the feelings I had at the time of painting this, even though it may be so long ago. It's as though there is a direct visual memory of association between the image and the feeling when I made this work. I had a sense of separateness and dislocation both within myself and within a social context with my peers at college. It's the same as smelling a suntan lotion and being transported to a beach on vacation 10 years previously.

*Plate XX*



**Chemistry Lesson**

82cm X 49cm

*Ink, paper, acrylic, silver leaf on canvas*



## Chemistry Lesson

This work was a culmination of past skills and techniques. The style of this painting was a continuation of the geometric studies I had done previously. I made the stretcher to specific golden mean proportions; 1.618. Exploring ideas of obscuring and revealing, by layering different papers, lead pencil, acrylic and metallic leaf; I focused upon ideas of the 127 elements and how they related to qualities and substances in the body and the planets. The various mediums, colours and the multiple elements at play, show the multitude of levels of existence (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual); of the compounds in the body, of what we see as the flesh, and what we perceive as our planet and our world.

I tried to ask the questions I needed to answer, those which required me to look at different areas of science and shape and self; a searching through the facets of my mind, both body-mind and academic mind, with the possibility of the unexpected as a conclusion. (Those who ask the questions cannot help but find the answers). I began to ask why I was alive and what was the purpose of being on this planet at all; being born, eating, sleeping, growing, fucking, parenting, loving, dying.

I felt like an observer, investigating nature from without, 'floating' above situations with detachment and engaging with other people, as though I was a third party.

Q: What's the next step?

A: The conversation with yourself, visual or literal

This painting was a direct response to such questions. I didn't find resolve in this piece, and it did not bring answers, but the cathartic process did raise more questions and that in itself was more important than finding some conclusive evidence for life. The painting was the second painting I did with the intention of it

being for this research so it was an important stepping-stone to unfolding my own creative process and questioning through visual expression. It was a tentative exploration in which I explored texture, colour and shape, but because I was too caught up in the result, I couldn't fully 'feel' what I needed to explore. As stated in the question above, this painting was a conversation with myself, but I sense that it was more of an external discourse with the medium and about the subject matter, rather than an internal dialogue being expressed. It was as though I was having one of my first exchanges with an acquaintance, but with time I sensed that I might be able to really get to the core questions and ruminations, and this was an introductory phase.

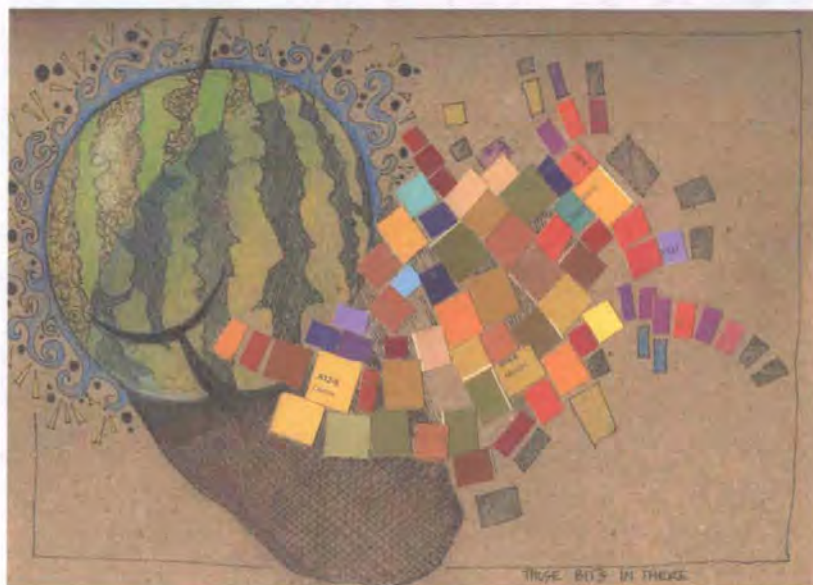


Illustration 36

*Plate XXI*



**Wall**

153cm X 153cm

Acrylic, oil on canvas



## Wall

Thinking back on all the crumbled building walls of the Middle East, (some war torn fragments of endless years of fighting), I was once again reminded that such damaged walls were about to be created in the second Gulf War. Surrounded here in NYC by Arabs, Palestinians and Iraqis, all of whom being opposed to the war, there is a blank look in their faces as they suppress their emotions for fear of being victimized by the gun-ho Americans. During this time, in which this painting was created, I was taking Hebrew lessons at the Jewish Community Centre. In the large lobby of the centre there were paintings by children of Israel asking, in childlike words and pictures, for peace. I noticed how close the Hebrew letters and grammar was to Arabic... all so close and yet so far. The one thing which remained in common with all the warring factions was their devotion to God, G\_d, Yahweh, Allah, or whatever other name is bestowed.

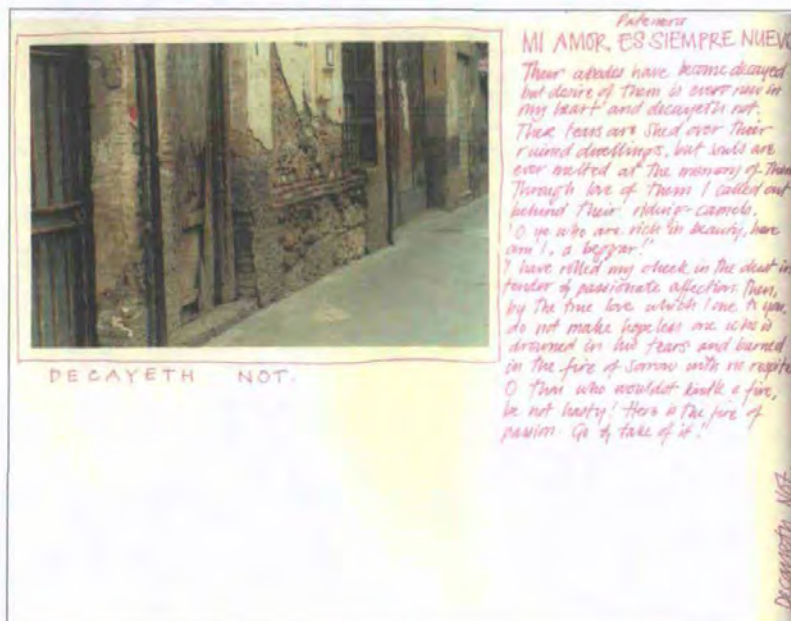


Illustration 39

Although inanimate, buildings bear witness, are used to pay homage, they house and protect and are destroyed by gun-fire, the elements, and time itself. Walls surround us and embrace us, they keep us out and bar entry. We respond to our environment. We move accordingly in reaction to the confines of our space. I know that I need space, high ceilings, hard floors, light and emptiness to feel free in my home. Architecture has a profound influence on behaviour, and it can be seen as far back as the rebuilding of the Great Mosque<sup>125</sup> in AD 665 when connections between the architecture and artistic expression in the Arab culture came to light. It was sometimes customary to throw pebbles on the floors of the finished structures (because there often wasn't the money to do anything more elaborate) but the hands of the worshippers became dusty and dirty after each prayer time, so it became common that the end of each worship would result in clapping to remove the dust from the hands. Ziyad Ibn Abihi said; *I am afraid that in the course of time the clapping of hands will be taken as part of the religious ceremony.*<sup>126</sup> Clapping is such large part of Islamic culture and music and that has been translated into an essential part of Flamenco, also.

This painting could be an old outside wall practically anywhere; a representation of an old wall, revealing graffiti saying that *there is no god but god*. The red signifies the bloodshed and the blue indicates the oceans separating and dividing the countries at war. The pinkish colour was appealing to me as a type of raw plaster. A new-ness and a potential is suggested by a layering of plaster, as each layer acts as both a mask of what went before, and as a 'clean slate'; such a blank surface begging for defilement. Covering a wall, making good, a new beginning – all indicated by the smooth mixture we spread onto walls. It's as though the writing (representing God) is floating above the plaster, above the troubles, but also creating the link between blood and the countries at war.

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<sup>125</sup> Mosque is a Christian word for 'place of prayer'

<sup>126</sup> Creswell, K.A.C (1958) *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex. p.12



### If You Think

... If you think

Bullets hissing towards beating hearts

In some country we know nothing about

Will miss you

Think again

They will not miss your beating heart

... They will hurt you, hit you, prick you

And they will not miss you

We are all one

One trembling human flesh<sup>127</sup>

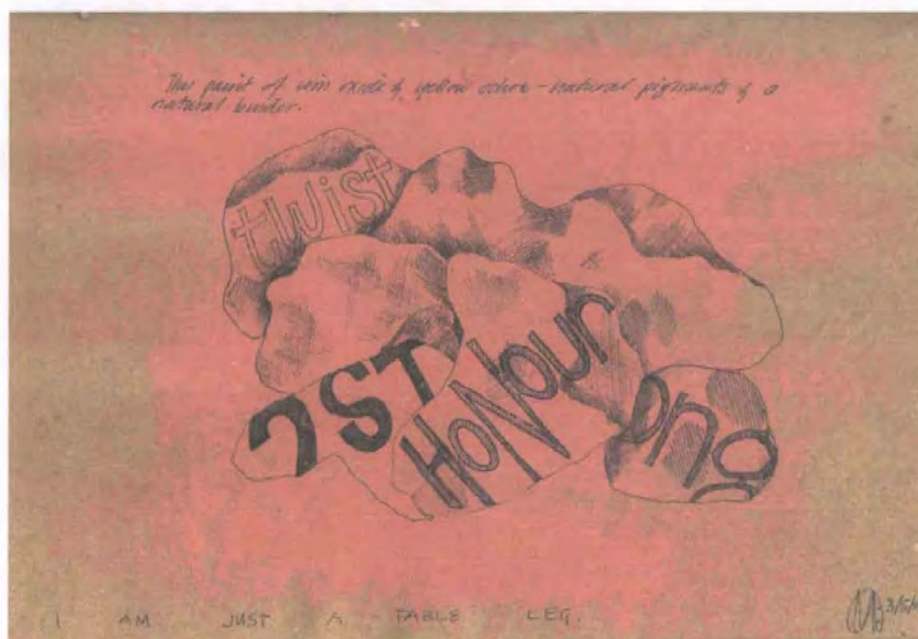


Illustration 40

<sup>127</sup> Agard, John (1989) *Life Doesn't Frighten Me At All*, Heinemann, London.



**Arctic**

*45.5cm X 60cm*

*Acrylic on canvas*



## Arctic



Illustration 41

Painted during one of the harshest winters on record, I stepped out of my apartment door to find a 7 foot snow drift blocking my exit. Cars and trucks were completely submerged, and the streets became huge toboggan run. Skies were blue after the storms, but in a blizzard the only way through it was with head down, eyes half closed, whilst maintaining thoughts of warmth. In the newspapers there were photographs of boys touching the tops of the hanging traffic lights while standing on snow-drifts.

I painted this as an expression of the snow blizzard I experienced. The kind of feeling, when walking in the snow, is a consuming exertion and there is a sense of being trapped; a feeling that there is nothing one can do against the power of nature. The heaviness in the legs, the freezing biting wind on the face, the grueling effort of the simplest tasks; it's an overall sensation of endurance and endless struggle. I have always harboured an irrational fear of excessive snow, the Poles, icebergs and the tundra. Making art enabled me to embrace the frustration and fear I felt during the snowy winter blizzards. I was able to re-create my sense of what could be contained and understood in the restriction I

experienced. By repetition and movement I enabled the trapped feelings to be liberated upon the canvas; liberation, by making the work, and yet containment as a way of displaying and communicating the sensations.

By making this piece I wanted to convey the harshness of winter, and in that expression bring the viewer closer to that experience by muting the original painting under a mottled white screen of titanium white paint, expressing a kind of 'heavy blanket' feeling which can overcome our most rational selves, in that, such feelings of the bleakness of winter, can momentarily quell our spirit, even though we know that it is transitory. The colours allude to a dream-like, almost ethereal quality which gives this painting transparency, in the same way that clouds reveal and also obscure. There is both a lightness and yet a suffocating sense in the amount of white used to submerge the colours and shapes within the painting. The number of circles and shapes on the small expanse of canvas create the closed-in sensation.

The several ways in which I use rotational symmetry within the painting, simultaneously display fixity and freedom not held within the limits and boundaries of the canvas edges. The interplay between the hard edges of the circles and the fluidity of movement expressed through highlighting certain parts of the circle segments, create links with notions of dance and movement, for example, definite Flamenco dance stamps and graceful swirls of the skirt.





**Kaleidoscope**

*46cm X 60cm*

*Acrylic, oil on canvas*



## Kaleidoscope

*... In all states of disorder in the universe there is not one that is utterly devoid of form; there will always be some trace of order in a given condition, however tenuous.*<sup>128</sup>

The almost imperceptible chaos within the order of the seemingly constant base rhythm of most music, (like flamenco or Latin), displays typical signs of feedback or iteration. Sound, is capable of being represented by fractal patterns like other forms of life and matter. Upon hearing a sound in repetition, we naturally try to hear some kind of series or pattern, thus creating a rhythm. Rhythm is pattern.

*Movement does not arise out of that which is at rest the form at rest arises out of movement.*<sup>129</sup>

This piece was inspired by the notion of movement and music and patterns that aren't instantly distinguishable. Whilst recording my CD with a couple of electronic musicians in New York, I was trying to experiment with rhythms, syncopation, vocal exercises and unusual arrangement of sound patterns. The computer-generated music is mostly a dense layering of notes and sounds. The result was sometimes unfamiliar emergences of sounds. This painting was more about allowing such layers and combinations of colour and appearance of form to dance and co-exist on the canvas. The shapes are sometimes fully formed and others are obscured, retracting and/or materializing. I intended to use mostly primary colours as a way of balancing the basic and fundamental (i.e. what we are first taught and that which makes up the colour spectrum) with the complex and unknown (random effects of paint when applied with a knife and the way in which a painting can never be visualised until it actually exists). Simplicity and complexity are the very essence of nature and therefore this painting represents

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<sup>128</sup> Wade, David (1991) *Crystal and Dragon: The Cosmic Two Step*, A Resurgence Book, U.K. p.27

<sup>129</sup> Steiner, Rudolf (1944) *Eurythmy as Visible Speech*, Anthroposophical Publishing Co., London. p.13

the juxtaposition of the equal and opposite elements in the universe. Complexity and the unknown are perfectly displayed in a child's kaleidoscope which brings together coloured fragments and reveals the spontaneity of shapes falling together at random.

The picture feels as though it has no boundaries, that it is a story without an end or it is an infinite dance or 'music of the spheres'. I considered creating an imposed border, or something which visually bound the shapes together, and harnessed the energy, but I felt that it needed to 'be free' without having to be held within the confines of even the edge of the canvas. So there is a sense that the picture is just a part of a whole image which continues into space. Just like unfamiliar new music, when played frequently or seen as a bigger whole, the patterns are eventually discernable. The spaces between the shapes are like silence between the sounds or dispersal of notes on a musical score.

*Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the spaces between the notes and curl my back to loneliness.*<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Angelou, Maya (1928 - ) Poet

*Plate XXIV*



**Ovum**

*45cm X 61cm*

*Acrylic, oil on canvas*

## Ovum

*... the circle, being the simplest of all possible shapes, stands for the totality of all shapes until shape becomes differentiated.*<sup>131</sup>

In Buddhist symbolism, Hokakai's universe was expressed in terms of a circle, triangle and square. The intensity of the ink in the circular form begins to diminish in the triangular form and on the square, the ink is quite faint. The heaviness of the line of the circle represents the greatest reality; that which is invisible and ephemeral therefore representing true reality as something intangible. The totality of the psyche is expressed as a circle; it is a symbol of the self.<sup>132</sup> In Taoist art, the fundamental principal is to draw a perfect circle in a single movement, and to identify implicitly with the centre of it, which remains unspecified.<sup>133</sup>

Symmetrical in all directions, the circle is the first real shape to be drawn by children (after lines and scribbles). It is suggested that circles only begin to represent circular objects when other shapes such as straight lines or squares become articulated. Then round shapes begin to stand for roundness, for example heads and the sun. Until then, the shape is just a random expression.<sup>134</sup>

Peter Sutton<sup>135</sup> notes that in the most ancient surviving artistic tradition, Australian aboriginal art, the majority of compositions, especially the more symmetrical ones, contain nothing much more than arrangements of circles.

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<sup>131</sup> Arnheim, Rudolf (1954) *Art and Visual Perception*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles. p.62

<sup>132</sup> Plato described the psyche as a sphere

<sup>133</sup> Birkhardt, Titus (1967) *Alchemy*, W.Stoddard, Stewart & Watkins, London. p.12

<sup>134</sup> Arnheim, Rudolf (1954) *Art and Visual Perception*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles. p.9

<sup>135</sup> Sutton, Peter (1998) *Dreamings: Art of Aboriginal Australia*, George Braziller, Australia. p.42





Spirit of the People

Sakshi Aramseyam

#### Illustration 41

Postcard of Aboriginal art, Australia

Perceived circles, such as the sun, have been worshipped, represented and drawn through the ages and used by ancient peoples like Mayan, Egyptian and also in Tibetan mandalas. In Zen, the circle represents enlightenment and human perfection. This 'perfection' is visible when we look at cells and the nature, of creation. 'One' is often seen as a circle or a dot and this relationship of *ones* and their relationship to other *ones*, *everything*, every particle is connected to another particle.

This painting was created at a time during of a lot of change and a new relationship, a new beginning; a birth of sorts. Upon reflection I became aware of the undeniable connectedness that humans have within the universe. Not only do we see the reflections within nature but in the greater whole, as parallels occur in all aspects of our daily existence.

*When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.*<sup>136</sup>

What appeared through the dark colours were the circles, and as I splashed thick paint onto the canvas, I created a thread or a link between the circles. Whatever I painted seemed to become more representational of conception, cells, eggs and sperm; creation and beginning at its most profound level. The colours established a relationship between the structure of the circles and the organization of the space. Space is created by organising shapes/lines on the canvas which then create a visual void between the images. It is as though there has to be a 'something' in order to see what 'no-thing' is. Colour and spatial awareness create dimensions which lead the viewer's eye into something more than just the measurements of the canvas. We don't calculate dimensions; we experience them. So by placing circles onto a rectangular canvas, I created a new space, an altered perception of that rectangle. The eye focuses upon what is in the rectangle and not the perimeters of the canvas itself.

There is a quality of naïveté to this painting; a kind of youthful/playful, but also an ancient and wise property, at the same time. Full-circles do seem to denote youth, simplicity and freedom when they appear like this. The deeper meaning in this is shown through the partly revealed quality of the shapes and the loose feeling in the random black splashes (since these were created truly randomly) which make links between the colours and circles and alters the state of relative order.

Although I feel this painting is coherent, I feel the use of space and colour gives me a sensation of something too uniform and childlike. I don't feel satisfied with the way in which the whole canvas seems dominated by one style which I find too simplistic and not visually engaging. I was exploring certain feelings, thoughts and ideas, which I need to allow and accept, now that they have been expressed

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<sup>136</sup> Muir, John (1838-1914) naturalist, explorer, writer

in this way. From that place, I can better see what I creatively need to do for myself to be more satisfied with the creative output.

*Plate XXV*



**Habebe**

46cm X 61cm

*Acrylic, oil on canvas*



## **Habebe**

*No money, no honey. No wife, no life.*<sup>137</sup>

'Habebe' was the first word I ever learned in Arabic as a child. All the men would call all women 'darling'. It is also used informally and sometimes from man to man but this specific spelling and pronunciation is for women only, (habebe is for a man).

As I wrote the word in Arabic on the canvas, and never sat well, it looked all wrong. It was too bright, and then it was too vibrant a colour. I wanted to use this word since it encapsulates such a sense of what Bahrain was for me. The word I painted looks like a sea monster to me, and maybe that is the truest representation of the way in which I remember the men who spoke the word 'habebe'. In truth, I was always pushing conventional boundaries of my communications and interactions with men in Bahrain. I was a young girl, but wise to the fact that being polite, blonde and savvy could get me most of what I wanted if I was careful and knew which rules I could bend. I felt safe enough to be able to deny the dangers of things to myself. My father was wise enough to know that my daring would only stretch so far, and that I could only handle most situations, not all. So, 'habebe' was the first word as a way 'in', as it signified that the first connection to a woman had been made.

I am uncomfortable with this piece. I find it depressing, almost macabre and very reminiscent of the table cloth at my grandparent's house. It was years ago since they passed away, but I remember the dark room and the huge oak table spread with the darkest maroon velvet and fringed table cloth. I hated the texture, the expanse of deep velvet swallowed up by the obscure carpet and dimly lit room; tall windows with net curtains and then more heavy dark velvet. All furniture was made from the thickest mahogany, and each piece was towering in the high

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<sup>137</sup> A constantly used saying by almost every man in Bahrain

room. Although all of this is not pleasant to me, it was part of what needed to be expressed; the darker, shadow-side; a mixture of memories from Bahrain and from Grandparents. It was a merging of worlds; the Arab world of false affections and the Communist world of my grandparents who had been married for well over 50 years as each other's 'habebe'. The red indicates something of the heart but also something darker and more mysterious, maybe more ominous as the word is submerged and partly obscured in the pigment.

The canvas was given to me (by a depressive), as a complete painting of a childlike image of New York. I painted over it and left some of the original marks which I wanted to be revealed through the paint I applied. The larger white marks were once traffic lights. The idea of layering and using an already existing painting as a base really appeals to me; an unwilling collaboration; a type of reverse excavation by being given some kind of construct or basis from which to explore. The choice can always be to erase what exists but to have some kind of connection by working with something 'given' as opposed to something created by self, is stimulating. This being the first time I had used a completely finished painting, it seemed appropriate to co-create a relationship, and that 'relationship' became with me and my 'darling'.

*Plate XXVI*



**In Yellow**

*50cm X 50cm*

*Acrylic, oil on canvas*



## In Yellow

*... in some sense the new pattern of organisation was already present: it was a latent possibility ... the new pattern had not been created at all; it has only been manifested in the physical world, whereas previously it was unmanifest.*<sup>138</sup>

I never had the desire to paint or draw on squares because I thought the shape was more limiting because of its equality; I preferred rectangles. I was, therefore, confronted with a different set of criteria when I was given this plain, square canvas. I felt instinctively that a square is a yellow colour, because I equate yellow with conformity, balance and structure, which are adjectives I would also apply to square shapes. I instinctively felt that circles needed to be used to counteract the 'squareness' of the canvas. This pattern seems to gyrate and move on the canvas, as the patterns are so lightly painted that they appear to lift off the surface, and 'dance' over the edges. There are no definable boundaries within this work, as though this is just a section of a larger painting, which could conceivably go on forever. Although the patterns shown in this piece are not uniform, yet seemingly structured, it is not necessarily a representation of the fact that on a much larger scale, pattern and repetition could not be deduced, because as chaos theory has proved, eventually iteration and pattern is everywhere.

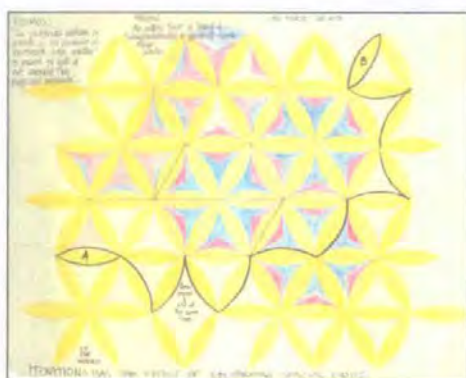


Illustration 42

<sup>138</sup> Sheldrake, Rupert (1988) *The Presence of the Past*, Harper Collins, London. p.308



*... all pure Ideas or archetypal patterns of harmony ... are inherently present in those who are capable of apprehending them. But they are not first received into the mind by a conceptual process, being the product, rather, of a sort of instinctive intuition of pure quantity, and are innate in these individuals...*<sup>139</sup>

Some obvious patterns are instantly visible in forms such as the tessellated diamond shapes on the skin of a pineapple or the five-pointed flower in the cross section of an apple. Sunflower spirals and shell swirls, snowflakes and ferns all display pattern, but what is less evident is the patterning in *all* of nature's forms. Multiplying a factor by itself, 'nature' produces feedback or iteration and non-linearity. It's a complex system of simplicity with its essence in unpredictability. The eye is inclined to see patterns, and so the brain arranges nature accordingly. By creating structures that replicate nature's wisdom (symmetrical, balanced, harmonious and organic), we are profoundly connected to the patterns, shapes or images which we perceive. The patterns seen in this painting tend towards the familiar flower we may draw as children, suggestive of a flower-like shape but non-dimensional, that is a symbol rather than a figurative drawing showing depth. It suggests something carefree and reminds me of kitchens, cooking and fruits. It belongs in the kitchen. It embodies the mixture of ingredients, the collaboration of ordered nature with chaos.

This old recipe, which is one of the most popular in Andalusia is something I have carried with me for a long time and this painting is the perfect expression of this dessert; creamy, eggy and lemon-zingy.

#### LECHE MERENGADA

1 tin (400 ml) evaporated milk

250ml milk

300ml double cream

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<sup>139</sup> Wilbur, Ken (2001) *Quantum Questions*, Shambhala, Boston, p. 65

200gr caster sugar

Cinnamon sticks

Rind of 1 lemon

4 egg whites

25ml lemon juice

Cinnamon powder

Mix all milk and cream in a saucepan.

Add all but 2 Tsp of sugar.

Add the lemon peel and cinnamon sticks.

Simmer for 30 mins.

Cool and strain.

Stir in 15 ml of lemon juice.

Refrigerate.

Beat eggs and slowly add rest of lemon juice and sugar.

Add to cold mixture and

...freeze.

*Plate XXVII*



**No Title**

30cm X 40cm

*Acrylic, oil on canvas*

### No Title



Illustration 43

To enable my deepest wisdom and creativity to be free, it is the most still and quiet inner place in myself which requires the most listening to and acceptance of; a direct parallel with the inquiry and searching for the reasons for being and for creating which leads us, (maybe only part way), to that 'source', at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, otherwise known as Spirit (as previously mentioned). It is such questions and such searching which have become the journey, (my journey), for the answers which are ephemeral (like Spirit) and slip away just as they appear. The realizations are difficult to hold onto, much like capturing a butterfly without damaging it, because even then its life is still so temporary, fleeting and short. The essence of what can be called the origin of our existence is that which is all and yet indefinable, simplicity and complexity existing side by side. This non-quantifiable notion cannot be located anywhere outside, in matter or text, and as Socrates so eloquently wrote, *The region of*



*which I speak, is the abode of reality without colour or shape, intangible but utterly real, apprehensible only by the pilot of the soul.*<sup>140</sup>

When I try to connect with that illusive inner-place, the thoughts and beliefs become a type of reality, self-actualizing and represented through pigment onto the canvas. From the beginning, this very small and thin canvas always seemed so fragile to me, a young child needing nurture. For that reason I couldn't use bold colours, but felt that something pastel and pale was suitable. The black 'splashes' unify all the sides of the canvas and bring soft, random form to the linear shapes and edges. The scoured grid lines are like the sensibility, the grounding, the compartmentalisation of feelings which give structure to the mind when all feels so nebulous and lost. Pink is the colour used in all mental health institutions to calm the extreme mental activity with the in-patients minds. The predominantly pink colour in this painting presents a subtle stability and calm. The mixture of chaos and order, even in the most fragile thing, can sometimes be its power because the contrast and heightened relationship between polar opposites creates an exciting tension but when there is no sense of chaos it is less obvious that it has a dualistic relationship.

Within the body of my practice, this painting is the most exposing for me because of its lack of strong colours, its diminutive size and lack of details. In retrospect, I see this work as my weakness and although there is much to be said for such vulnerability, I think we each gauge just how comfortable we are with the vulnerability we expose. It was not intentional to reveal such a pallid version of my inner self, but I do not want to allow my own fear and self-judgement to 'cover up' the exposure I experience with regard to this work. In the times when I feel the most unhappy, helpless, small, young and powerless, there is a lack of expansion. I care less, I show less, I retreat and make myself small and I feel empty. To be in that state and to be 'seen' in that place of such desperate

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<sup>140</sup> Wilbur, Ken (1995) *Sex, Ecology and Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*, Shambhala Publications p.328 ( as quoted from Phaedrus, p.52)

vulnerability is also some kind of evolution by being able to expose it and not hide. This painting is all that; small, meek, blank, subtle but with traces of connectedness and strength running thorough it.

*Plate XXVIII*



**Hope Found**

*75cm X 50cm*

*Acrylic on canvas*

## **Hope Found**

*Even if the loud notes are sounding, one should still concentrate on the subtle sound in the heart.<sup>141</sup>*

I stood in the middle of Central Park, and the buildings were the surrounding arms which held the grass in the quadrangle and prevented it from spilling out. Up above was a clear night sky, with deep-set stars sunken into the black. It was a night for star-gazers and telescopes were provided. I passed the huge planetarium on my way home. The blue lights shone through the huge glass windows where the giant telescope was on display. All these things to help us to see beyond our small daily world, and yet something still creates a boundary to stop us from really being able to comprehend the vastness of infinity, space, nothingness or everything.

I was walking home when I saw a canvas lying on the pavement; an orphan canvas. It was semi-painted with some neutral tones; I picked it up and as soon as I got home I painted on it. Without any preparation, I began to roll on the mixtures of blue, vermillion, aqua and cobalt. I was preparing it for the next stage of the process, which would have been dividing it up into compartments, squares, rectangles and drafting out some geometry using a pair of compass and a straight edge. I then moved house and the painting remained as it was. I hung it. The peace I found in my own personal transition is mirrored on the canvas. There is serenity and depth, which I felt paralleled my own feelings at the time. The open-ended potential that is offered when we look at the stars is seen when there is space for the viewers own thoughts and feelings to interact with subtle tonal changes.

It was whole in its simplicity and complete in its incompleteness. The way in which the eye is guided by the bright spots of yellow paint takes the viewer into

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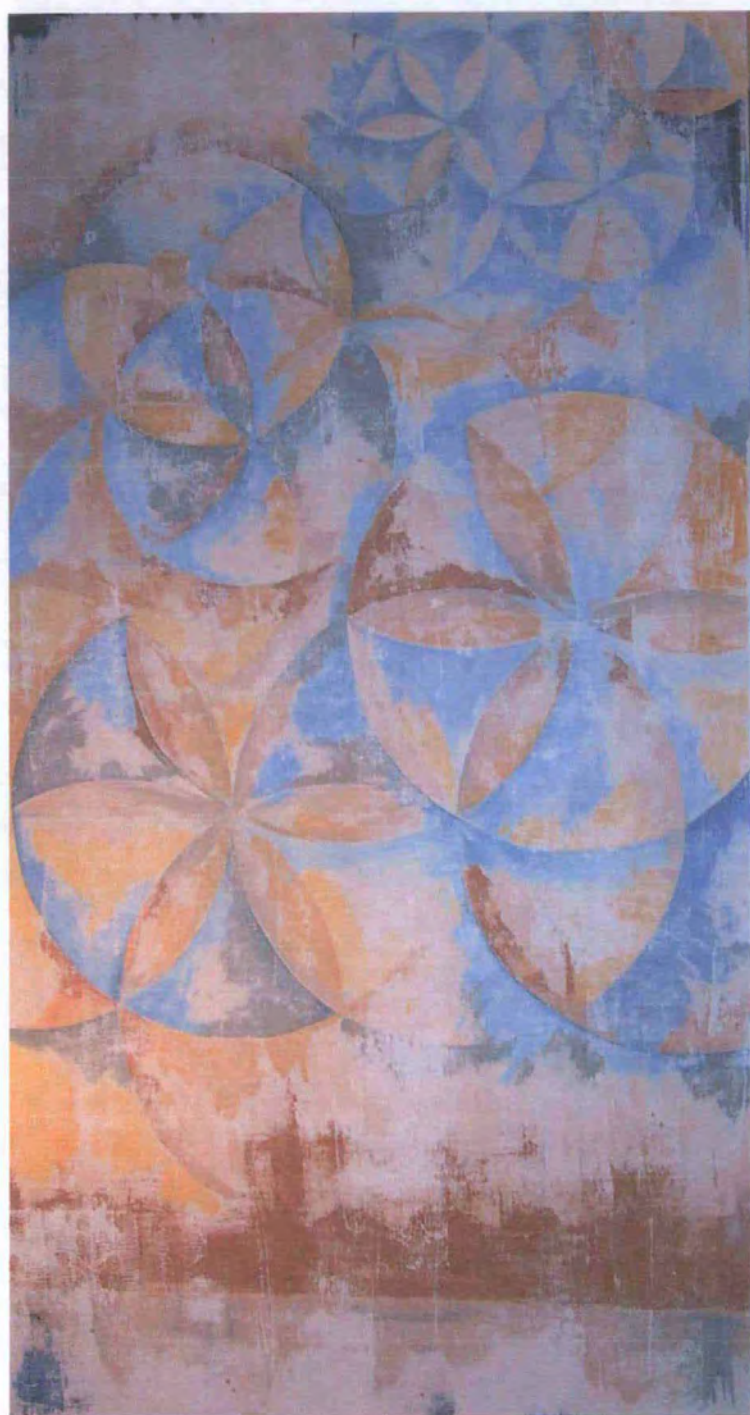
<sup>141</sup> Upanishad



the depths of the painting. This painting denotes a tranquility of a paternal nature. I find more and more within its uncomplicated image. The subtlety leads the viewer back to self, infinity and a timelessness which makes the momentary world bigger by acknowledging that there is more.

I realize that I use blue so often in my paintings and can only think that it's because I find the colour to have the most potential for depth and expression and also my association with the 'blues' of Islamic art and tiles, is so strong. I have a half-kilo of pure cobalt pigment which can be added to a binder to make a natural paint. If even a spec of this cobalt dust gets onto anything, the stain is permanent because the tint is so intense. The colour blue, in its vastness, is the sky and sea and forever, as it spans out into the distance and continues past the horizon. This painting is by far the most dense and concentrated piece with the most bold presence and intensity. The lack of lines, shape and form give this painting a calmer more confident feeling. It is the only piece I have ever done like this and it remains very unapologetic.

*Plate XXIX*



**Eternal Moon**

76cm X 147cm

*Acrylic on canvas*

## **Eternal Moon**

As I have begun to get commissioned work, I have developed my own authority, my own identity as a person who makes marks on a canvas; whose marks have meaning and whose marks are interpreted by someone else as something they like and want to live with on a daily basis.

The making of this piece coincided with my own emotional searching. The moon was in Pisces at the time and all feelings were hidden, secretive and like the deepest underground riverbed. As I made this work in the basement of my current apartment, I realized that I too, was in that deepest place, a dark cellar, allowing feelings and emotions to be the guide for the flow of pigment and curves on the canvas. I tried harder than ever to be totally present to the creation of the piece; from the building of the stretcher and it's taught, creamy-white linen to the final roller mark made upon the painting. I was present to those times when I thought that it might not become anything at all. I thought that it would be awful, a disaster. It was when I lost my total awareness that the magic happened and I stepped back and noticed that it was complete. As I neared completion, I knew the end was in sight and then as I looked at it, I had the strangest feeling that I hadn't made the work at all. I felt like a magician, a magus, an alchemist; I was a wizard who had cast a spell and the painting had painted itself.

The formal basis for this work was inspired by an apartment in NY. I saw the most minimal white space, uncluttered by objects and furniture. There was just a white bed, a white couch, a white bathroom and all white fixtures. The challenge was to make a piece of work which complemented that simplicity and calm. I began with what looked like architectural blue prints, concentric blue moons, replicating and growing bigger to fill the space; these are still visible to the observer. Just as the blue print is an integral underlying part of a structure, the moon is the essential force upon the tides and rhythm of the planet. The nature

of the piece creates a focal point within the white room, as it brings together the subtle hues of the walls and furniture within the space.

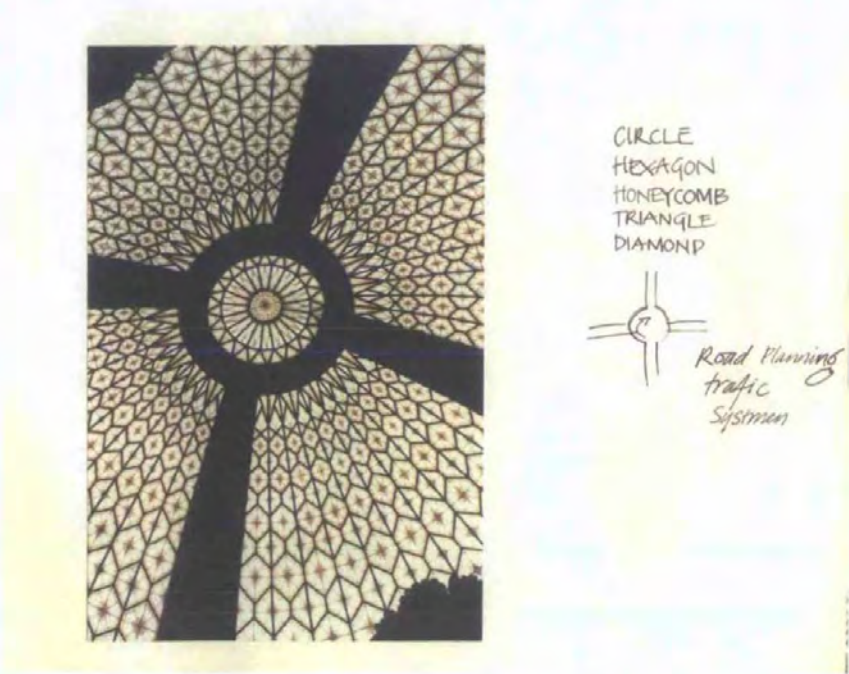


Illustration 44  
Photograph of a glass roof in a church in Granada



*Plate XXX*



**Exile**

*70cm X 130cm*

*Acrylic on canvas*

## Exile

Edward Said<sup>142</sup> died. He was a formative part of my education in thinking and conceptualising about cultural imperialism. He represented a critical eye on not only the western perceptions and historical interpretations of the Orient and Middle East, but due to his geographical place in the world (USA), he also gave great reflection on the Middle East itself, particularly that of the Palestinian conflict. He once alluded to the notion that exile, as a metaphorical state, gives one an outsiders' perspective on the world.



Illustration 45

I realize that I am in such exile. I hold the perspective of an outsider as my identity. I am fragmented and destined to never be 'at home' because home is not one place, and my locational make-up is a piecing-together of cultures, landscapes and environments. I choose to call what I experience 'exile', because at least I am both outwardly and inwardly foreign. There is no question that I

<sup>142</sup> Born in Jerusalem 1935 moved to USA aged 16; died September 2003 after a long battle with leukaemia. He was a literary and cultural critic and author.



don't belong; it's obvious that I don't. I fit in between the cracks of society, almost unperceivable when I disappear amidst the crowds, but when I speak or sit in a small group, it is instantly recognisable by my accent, my words or the way I hold my knife and fork, that I am FOREIGN. The challenge for me is always to qualify the unqualifiable, the worlds within worlds, the feelings or moving energy within all realms of being; to identify this and express it in a way which can be understood.

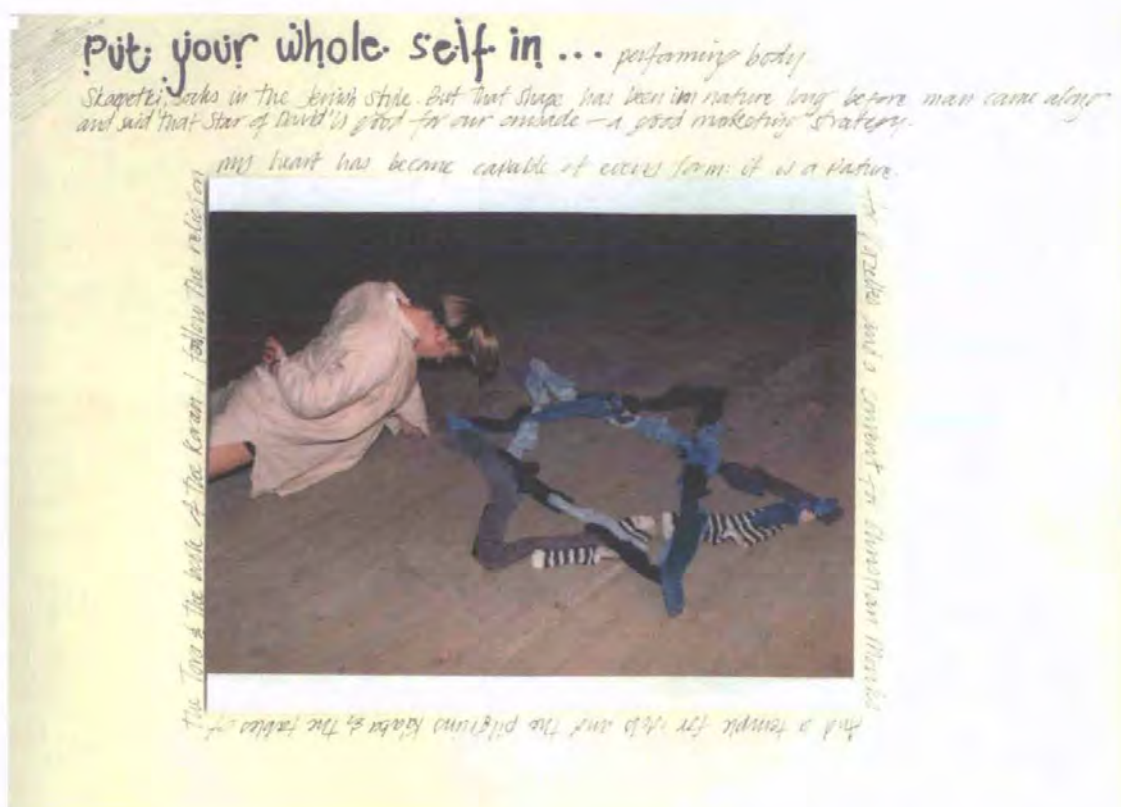


Illustration 46

Myself in a solo performance in Poland

Just as exile itself is full of tribulations, even the building of this canvas was full of trials, as though from its conception it represented the difficulties of exile, the struggle and the resistance. The wood was measured perfectly, but for some reason never created a perfect rectangle, and the canvas had to be re-stretched on a different stretcher. The re-shaping and re-fitting was a direct mirror of the way identity is re-moulded and shaped to fit the environment. Although one remains as oneself, there is a constant shift which takes place as relocation places customs and social behaviour upon the 'original' actions, words and norms of the *self*.

The very muted colours are, in places, almost imperceptible against the titanium white background. The shapes appear to rise and recede, then reveal their soft edges from behind the veil of white. There is a sense of the clandestine, tentative revelation, obscurity and secrecy. The painting has very subtle tones and pale colours and is almost camouflaged within itself as another series of shapes remain obscured. The way in which the abstruse elements of the image seem to embody a unity within themselves is exactly that which keeps the viewer slightly removed, suggesting that feeling of defense which is imbued within those in exile. As much as is hidden in this painting, it is in itself a revelation. Smoke-screens and illusions are part of the world of exile and this pale canvas shows both fragility, movement and a sense that there is always much more than what is being shown or revealed at any given moment.



Plate XXXI



**Falling**

*46cm X 60cm*

*Acrylic on canvas*

## **Falling**

This piece was inspired by the amazing fall colours in Central Park; the smell<sup>143</sup> of roasting nuts and the pretzel sellers and wet leaves on the tarmac. Looking down from a small rise in the road inside the park, I could see the leaves falling so fast in the afternoon sunshine that they looked like a golden rain downpour. Such a magnificent sight made me shout out to anyone passing! I have never seen autumn as it appears in NY. The maple trees create the most luscious red leaves, and mixed with evergreens and the fading yellows, the park is a dense mix of vibrant hues. The petals and dimensions of leaves and the configuration of light playing upon each leaf, is represented in this work by the multi-faceted circles and their parts, as though the shades of autumn sunlight alter the colours as they move.

But unlike the apparent chaos and unsymmetrical configurations of leaves, piles of leaves and broken leaves with dismembered spines; this representation was symmetrical. This is the only totally symmetrical painting I have done. It wasn't intentional initially, but as soon as I began to use the pair of compass, every mark I made was symmetrical. That extended into the painting, which seemed to be much more controlled and methodical than previous canvasses. Working with a sense of autumn and change and a casting off of one way; this is the only painting in which I did not use a palette knife but instead painted the whole canvas with a brush. Having always used a knife, up until this point, enabled me to work less formally and with more free strokes. I used the knife not only to add paint but also to take away, to cut and scour the paint already applied. The knife, like a weapon, made my painting less controlled and more aggressive; in fact the knife was not a part of me, but a definite appliance or tool. The imposition of

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<sup>143</sup> Smells have always been very evocative for me and can conjour very vivid memories and feelings. I have made decisions based upon smell alone. I am able to smell the cheeks of people I am close to and tell them what they ate on the previous day. If I were to list the order of heightened awareness of my 5 senses, smell would be at the top. I can easily attribute colour and texture to smell. But I think that everyone is 'smell sensitive' and that it is supremely linked to memory. For example, I think most people can smell a suntan cream and be viscerally transported to the beach, time and place of that specific holiday.

absolute symmetry lead me to use a more precise mark-making instrument, a fine brush. The brush was a soft applicator and worked almost like an extension of myself, like a finger. So, as the work became closer to 'nature' in its composition, the way in which I painted became more integrated and closer to the nature of myself. The realisation of this change and development gives me the sense that I am becoming more in tune with my subject matter, and also with myself as an artist, who is able to express that which is often beyond analysis until after the creation. This gave me a definite feeling of things changing; my style shifting and a new way of painting beginning to emerge.

It feels like the 'autumn' of this series, an ending of one way and beginning of another. The journey is rounded off by a much more 'composed' painting, replicating the 'orders of nature' in its symmetry and also in the way that I painted it. New ideas for new ways of making work begin to slowly manifest in sparks of the imagination, collecting there, until there is a medium and a will with which to express them.

## **Inner Geography of the Unseen**

*But as all severall soules containe  
Mixtures of things they know not what,  
Love, these mixt soules, doth mixe again,  
And makes both one, each this and that.*

This work began because of feelings as opposed to thoughts. Feeling like I needed to understand my world, my part in the world and my expression of such understanding; feelings which wrestled inside me like opposing tides. The creative and expressive journey has always been a way to articulate feelings about knowing something which often defies and evades easy communication. Expressing is one thing, but expressing in a way in which can be understood is another. It takes at least two people, one to express and one to understand, listen, see and interpret. This voyage of understanding, (where I came from and how those things, places and experiences affected my perception and creativity), is the very route which leads from memory and senses, wending round and about and back to self; an altered self, a self-reflecting self, a self which makes marks so that the ego can view the self tangibly.

Feelings are primarily inside things, untouchable sensations rattling around in heads and bodies. This creative life is about getting them outside the direct experience, be that painting, dancing, music, writing or any other form of expression. The power of my feelings is sometimes so pure and immense that I am left alone in them; the feelings are in me; inside, big and tumbling. No amount of representation can convey the intensity, and I implode, consumed and numb. This artist, expressing through and in whatever medium, makes work in an attempt to communicate the inside, out.



*The self-knowledge of the consciousness is mainly or wholly a knowledge which eludes the inventory method of description.*<sup>144</sup>

When my language was less descriptive and my rationale about the dynamics of the world was more basic, my art was more precise; in so much as the creative process as a child was almost the only way I had, to begin to express the confusion and chaos inside. I was trying to find one mode of representation which could unify all the parts of my worlds, the scattered homes and places around the globe, the multi-cultures to which I didn't really belong, the hybrid of religions, languages and social behaviours. I found a way to simplify the sensory overload, and that was to return to that first creative impulse, my primary form as a young child, that which was art. I feel increasingly less exorcised and revealed by producing art although it used to be the only tool I had to help me to understand my childhood world. As I develop more effective rational and connectedness with my bodily sensations and feelings, art has become more of a means to an end rather than a burning need. My artwork once so detailed, specific, patient and eloquent (for fear of being misunderstood), with drawings expressing almost every nuance of light and form represented with delicate command of the medium, is now art work which is less restricted and more integrated. Art, like *self*, constantly evolving and changing but always in tandem with one another.

*The world is given to me only once, not one existing and one perceived. Subject and object are only one.*<sup>145</sup>

*Nature imposes values because it is creation*<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Wilbur, Ken (2001) *Quantum Questions*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Massachusetts. p. 202

<sup>145</sup> Wilbur, Ken (2001) *Quantum Questions*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Massachusetts. p. 81

<sup>146</sup> Goodwin, Brian (1998) *How The Leopard Changed It's Spots*, Scribner, London. P. 215 (Gunther Altner (1991) -Natur-Vergessenheit. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

The creative map I have shaped with the two series of paintings and sketchbooks, is a journey and development of ideas, beliefs and expression. Just as those marks have been made in the physical world, I have a similar map which I carry with me; a selection of scars on my skin from accidents and operations and from aging in the physical world. These are the trace marks on my body map. They read as destination signs and blemishes on the landscape of my physical self. I can recount the times, stories and events surrounding the healed wound; healed but still traceable through sight and through my memory. The experiences are such on the inside that if I was viewed and bisected from the Soul to Spirit and the mind, my *self* could be best traced by a series of marks on the paper, songs on the ether, sighs, tears, footprints and disintegrating expressions of 'me-ness' in the day-to-day. All the creative output is amassing an abject body of self in the physical world; a world which can be more readily accessed by others. Each piece is a mark in the time continuum, an addition, alongside the art work, to the visual content in my external world. In micro, the maps of the self are displayed in the physical. The iris contains a series of markings, the genetic make up of blood and skin DNA, and this hand with all the lines on the palm is just a map of the human heart; this heart. This breath is what unifies me, without individuality, with everyone else on this planet; the only voluntary, involuntary action; sharing breath in rhythm.

Making art work or written work is allowing fragments of the physical self, emotional self, creative self to be pieced together, sewn, stitched, glued, joined, bolted, wedged, soldered, stuck and re-assembled in the mind and consequently on the canvas or page. Pattern, structure and process are inseparable properties in the phenomenon of life. The fundamentals, such as the awareness of the inherent attributes of nature and the mathematic and essential fabric of creation, are of prime importance in our world of the senses. As we become more aware of the patterns in nature and in our lives, we experience the essential life force. With our ability to self-reflect and have a consciousness, humans, as part of the universe, are intelligent because of the cognition inherent in the process of life.

We are profoundly affected as connections and patterns we perceive trigger a resonance in the heart, Spirit and soul.

We are a plethora of influences; a meeting place of cultures and beliefs, a mixture of elements, genetic blue prints, social conditioning and feelings. Presently, a new mode of study is looking at why we choose what we choose. It has to take into consideration all the elements of individual conditioning and the selection process. I am not sure how well this can be quantified but initial stages of research have brought up the argument that when we say we are a certain way in a certain situation, we actually do not know. We are unable to really say how we are, and who we are. External circumstances and factors are too many and our inability to be totally objective makes us all present false notions or selective fragments. It's like show and tell, but in truth, it's more like reveal yourself as best you can and say what you like, for it's always changing, partial and subjective. It doesn't seem to be about adding layers to our personas or growing into something, but more about unraveling the *self* and revealing all the nuances which make up our psyche, memories and personal expression of creativity, in some way of attempting to discover and expose, tell stories and explain. We strive for revelation, understanding or organization of all parts of our lives but we are primarily surface-searching. What of unseen energy lines, ucca cords, psychic channeling, dowsing, reiki, ancient Chinese healing arts, meridian lines, chakras, manifest illness, voodoo, cranio-sacral, muscle testing, holotropic breathing, rolfing, tragger work, tragger work? ... The list is endless of all those energies or 'centres' which we perceive but which we often don't incorporate in our rational world view, through lack of words to express the understanding and experience. How can we draw up a new map of life and living when we can only sense part of what exists? Rupert Sheldrake has made reference to the patterns which haven't been discovered but revealed, and our understanding is constantly embracing and unfolding new 'discoveries', existing with or without our knowledge and perception. For this reason art, (both mine and others') has been a mode of sensorial extraction which has created the basis from which language

can sometimes be brought forth. It has enabled me to wrestle with ideas and make manifest that which was nebulous.

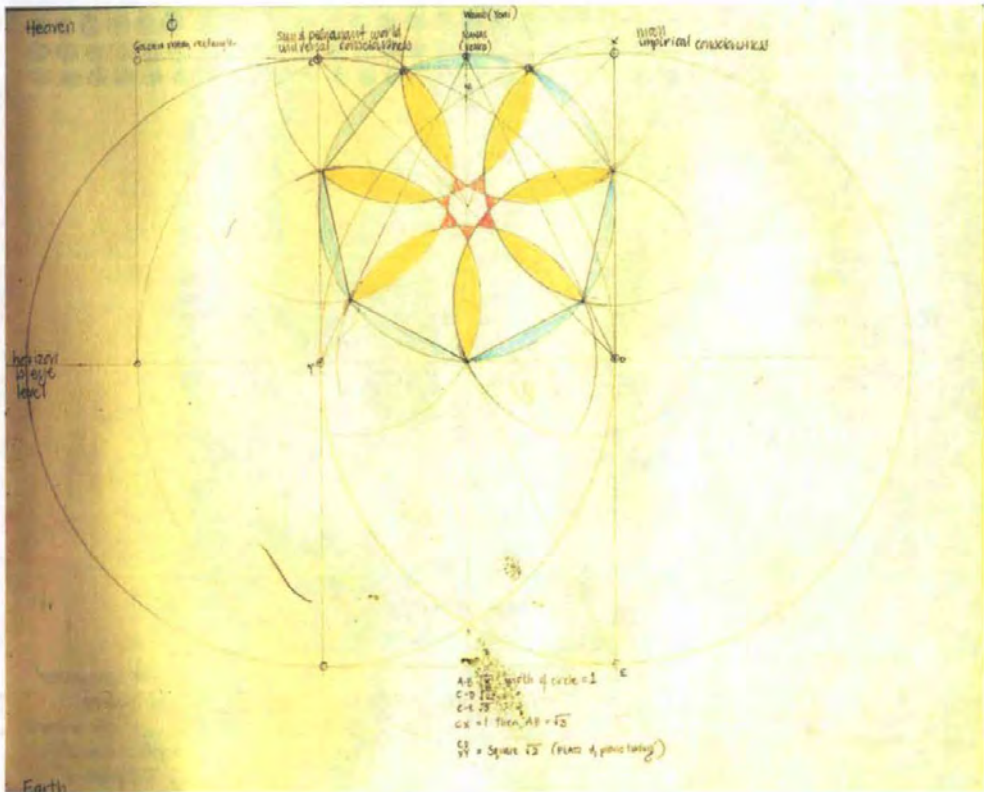


Illustration 46

Then...



## The Journey of Non Arrival - Bisecting the Self

Having covered a diverse range of subjects, it is necessary to re-trace the thread adjoining each area. All roads lead to Rome; all subjects converge at the *self*. It has always been my intention that the subjects co-exist, integrating them within the *self*, in a way in which each can have its place in the chaos of thoughts, feelings and experiences but make up a bigger picture, existing apart from the *self*. That picture is bi-sections of *self*, elements intertwined, both fragmented and coherent concurrently.

From the notion of zero to the all encompassing one of Oneness (a small jump numerically but an infinite jump philosophically), we see how we are unequivocally connected to the numerical systems we employ and how we have multi-faceted understandings of ourselves and our arithmetical world. With the understanding of the inherent nature of number, counting and its construction, there comes a realisation that there is more to our knowing than the qualifiable. The qualifiable remains within the realms of science, in which new developments and ideas shape the understanding of the physical world. To begin to 'prove' the non-qualifiable would instantly place inappropriate limitations upon that which cannot be defined with the ever-evolving knowledge of science. I agree with Ken Wilbur, who writes with lucidity about science and philosophy. Without belittling science, he states: *But all things are not ultimately made of subatomic particles; all things, including subatomic particles, are ultimately made of God*<sup>147</sup>. *And the material realm, far from being the most significant, is the least significant: it has less Being than life, which has less Being than mind, which has less Being than soul, which has less Being than spirit. Physics is simply the study of the realm of the least Being.*<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Universal force, unlimited power, system beyond our comprehension.

<sup>148</sup> Wilbur, Ken (2001) *Quantum Questions*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Massachusetts. p. 26

Numbers have significance beyond their physical representation of things; we embody knowledge revealed by ancient wisdom. Geometry and number help to partially describe, in applicable terms, how nature is 'constructed' and understood by man. Man has developed architecture, not just as a dwelling space but as one of the ways used to physicalise number within the cosmos. It has enabled man to externalise internal measure, inner geometry. Classic constructions re-present the temple as an extension of the body, for both a place in which the soul and Spirit resides. I made specific reference to the Alhambra as an example of the full realisation of geometry in construction and decoration through the influence of Islam, the Moors, Christianity and Southern Spain; it is an ideal connection between the cultures and influences in my life. The Alhambra is a place that utilises a multitude of forms and patterns to express details of nature, religion, number and so much more than just an ornamental grand palace. For that reason the Alhambra was a great inspiration for my work. The links between the Alhambra and Flamenco were smooth and the two created endless stimulation for me.



Illustration 47

The way in which the Flamenco singer turns radically inward (*ensimismado*) to source the music is reminiscent of the way in which any expression of art comes from a place inside, a place almost beyond the self. The *self* presents itself as expression and thoughts through this writing and the images between the text. The art works are illustrations of process and journey and the descriptions account for the marks made upon the paper. The way each paper is sewn or torn is an expression of that which is partially contextualised in this thesis, as each piece is explained and explored.

By making a 'series' of work, I noticed repeat themes of chaos, obscurity, fragments, iterating shapes and parts of my personality and influences, which I cannot verbally explain but can see in the 'character' of the work. The arrival and departure points, which have marked certain times on my life curve, are those which have had a profound influence. Some of which, have taken root subconsciously only to be revealed when probed and unfolded through making art.

Ephemeral qualities evade complete definition by their very nature so when we speak of Spirit and soul, the all-pervading nature of being breathes life into the deep knowledge we embody. Religions and philosophies attempt to explain and quantify these qualities but we all know them more deeply through our very life essence and our own life force and yet as I mentioned at the beginning of this work, to truly name Spirit is to cease its existence because it is unqualifiable by its very nature. Religions speak in images and parables which never fully correspond to the meanings they are trying to convey. To give all these evanescent examples and notions an all-encompassing explanation would diminish and reduce them in every way and fail to even touch upon the essence of their nature. So naming or not naming does not diminish their existence but points to the inner knowing of each of us to experience their presence and then

try to outwardly express such. To paraphrase Shakespeare, 'a rose by any other name would smell as sweet'

To name the whole of what I have written would be to reduce it to something that it is not, even all the paintings are only surface marks and elements of description and expression. It finds its full explanation when it reveals itself in the soul of the reader and viewer. The essence of the work unfolds with individual inner knowing and a connectedness that understands and speaks nature's language in the human be-ing and the being of humanity.

*...the understanding of pattern is crucial to understand the living world.<sup>149</sup>*

Shapes and patterns typically embody timeless relationships and connections which are replicated throughout our lives. They make up our physical world but also express our inner world. They are expressed in design, movement and ancient symbols. These patterns are a collection of understandings, inner dialogues with highest self and iterations of ideas.

In an attempt to create a oneness, a coherent form resulting from the ideas discussed; it is important to note that the patterns (the way in which I make links between theories, ideas, feelings and memories) which connect are still in their embryonic stage. That is to say, that the patterns within the art work and written word which can be recognised or understood by an onlooker, are in their formative stages. Therefore the deeper reality of all the subject matter is more like an iceberg with the smallest part visible. What is being acknowledged is the underlying pattern, however tentative it might be.

My self is the point at which the topics and ideas find a focal point and converge. This process of connection initially arrives in a non-literal way. Images and feelings precede the words. Trying to create a language or formula for the series

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<sup>149</sup> Capra, Fritjof (1997) *The Web of Life*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. p.150



of possible links and overlaps is an attempt to prove and justify what is principally a felt sense. The examination of the possibilities of inherent unity, is primarily done with the faith that intrinsic feelings are of importance. This writing is one of the methods I have used to try to convey these perceptions and thoughts. The work then becomes a series of methods and explanations of patterns and representations of the images. Plato called this *a copy of a copy* or the third removal of truth. If the written sections stimulate and provoke thought, then the feelings created, can take the reader back to their own truth with regard to the subject matter, and the notions of readers' own place within the patterned nature of the cosmos, their own experience of it. As I quoted at the beginning ... *words are representations of reality, not reality itself.*<sup>150</sup> It seems that our individual reality develops with our understanding and deepening perception of that which appears simple and fundamental. The words here, as elsewhere, are keys to unlock doors of possibilities and probabilities which may allow us to believe that we have found our own reality.

*What is reality made of? The study of substance was always more prolific than the study of pattern.*<sup>151</sup>



Illustration 48

<sup>150</sup> Storr, Anthony (1972) *The Dynamics of Creation*, Penguin, England. p.84

<sup>151</sup> Capra, Fritjof (1997) *The Web of Life*, Harper Collins, U.S.A. p.80

Notions of reality and perception are enmeshed with questions such as, how can we know what is *reality*? How do we know that what we believe or see is *true*? As we begin to unfold our perceptions through experiences, creative expression and spiritual searching, we can recognise patterns and connections that were previously invisible to us. Thoughts become circular. As we see deeper into our thoughts and beliefs, we begin to see both the totality and the emptiness side by side. The 'reality' becomes unreal and illusionary. The journey of discovery and uncovering leads us full circle, from a simple state of unknowing, to a mass of intrigue and back to the feeling that we know nothing. The essence of the work is because it comes from that which is more profound than words are able to articulate. As Deepak Chopra once said, *I am that, you are that, this is that and that is all there is.*

*Life is procreated and projected into physical manifestation through the synthesis of dualities. The reciprocal interaction between pairs ... produces the eternal pulsation and the ceaseless cycles that are life's hallmarks.*<sup>152</sup>

It is my hope that through our journey, both inner and outer, and through this text, we connect to the first mark made at the beginning of the circle. We return to the simple. We return to that all-knowing and wise place in ourselves; that place which *knows* inherently the patterns which connect, and is part of those patterns. We each begin to see all the individual coincidences, interests, achievements and dreams, and we can almost see the threads which tie it all together; those thread which we call the *self*. And we find ourselves back with the obvious; nothing has changed but everything is different.

*... and it is all exactly as it should be, when the Robin sings on a glorious morning, and raindrops beat on the temple roof.*<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Coates, Callum (1996) *Living Energies*, Gateway Books, U.K. p.294

<sup>153</sup> Wilbur, Ken (1997) *The Eye of Spirit*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Massachusetts. p.57

*It's so hard to tear myself away, even when you know it's over, it's too much to say. Banish all dismay. Extinguish every sorrow. If I am lost or I'm forgiven, the birds will still be singing.*<sup>154</sup>

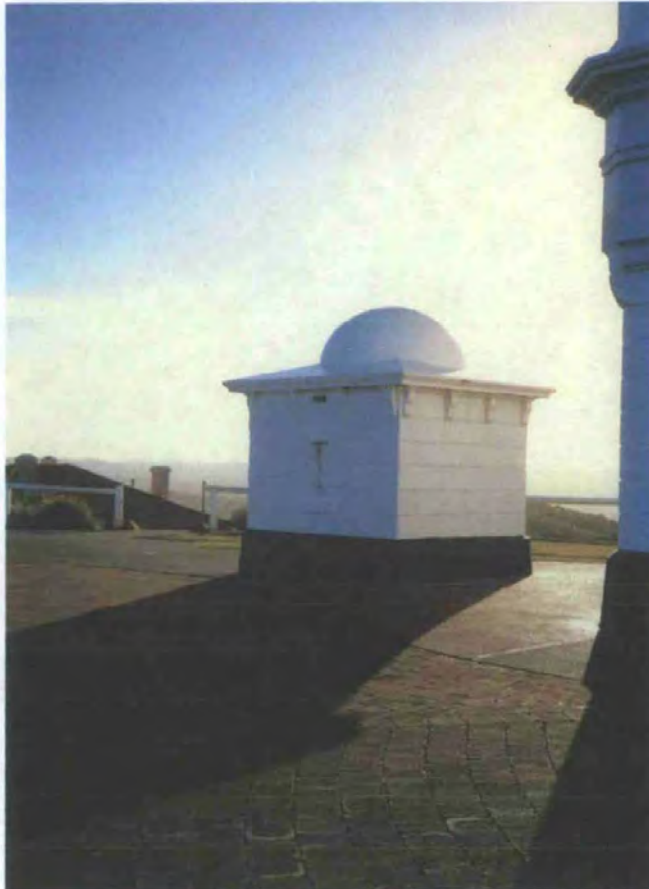


Illustration 49  
Cube and sphere temple, Namibia

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<sup>154</sup> Costello, Elvis (1993) *The Juliet Letters*, The Birds will still be Singing, Warner Bros.



*Twist me, turn me  
Show me the elf  
I looked in the mirror  
And there saw...*

*myself ...*





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### **Author's Declaration**

At no time during the registration for the degree of Master of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

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Signed .....  .....

Date ..... 10. 7. 04 .....