

Natures Antidote

A Personal Journey

A number of years ago I was visiting a friend attending art college in Munster, Germany. This is a beautiful city on the Rhine with lots of wonderful examples of contemporary and historic architecture, parks, bike paths and many other things you would hope to discover in a European city. The unique thing about my visit was that it took place while their regular, (every ten years), installation sculpture show called 'Sculpture Project' was being held. My friend set me up with a rental bike and sent me on my way with a packed lunch and a map.

It was exciting to travel through the city and come upon sculpture after sculpture of architectural proportions. Each one grabbing hold of me and shaking me free of my concept of reality, in it's own unique way. There were giant spheres overlooking a pond, a path that lead you below street level and back again, and a surfboard turned into a giant sunflower with a screen in the center that scrolled a story that pulled the character's names from the local phone registry. Finally, in the courtyard of a magnificent Baroque villa, there was a great ball made up of crushed plastic animal mascots opposite the compactor that did the job.

I spent that day visiting sculpture after sculpture, with one after the other challenging my concept of reality in different ways. Each artist was exploring the world and trying to expose our limited sense of our reality. However, at a certain point I found myself overwhelmed. It was as if I was being pulled into a thousand different blocks and someone was trying to see what other shapes they could make with them. I was like a giant box of Lego but, as with most Lego collections, the original building instructions had long been lost. As I reflected on all of these alternated realities I had just experienced, I asked myself the question 'who is remembering how this all goes back together'.

It was at this point that I found myself on one of the many bike trails that intersected the city which are lined with tall overhanging trees and beautiful gardens. It was here that I found my answer. It was Nature; Nature, herself, is the great blueprint of the world, and the natural world is where we must look to bring harmony, balance and healing into our lives.

As an artist and educator, I have come to see that human beings have a deep connection to the world and everything living around us. Our bodies are made up of the substances of this planet and in this way we are connected to all other life. However, we can often find ourselves feeling isolated and alone, separate from everything around us. Why is this? As when ancient human beings were building their stone circles, all we have to do is look up. There, surrounding us in all directions, are the stars, the planets, the sun, the moon and the vast emptiness of the universe. These influence everything on the planet yet are not of this earth. They became aware that they were

apart of something much greater than this planet and from then on they started to map the night sky. It is this awareness that makes us unique and gives us a sense of freedom and imagination, yet it can also leave us at times feeling separate and alone.

From the perspective of evolution our bodies have not changed much over the last 10,000 years; however, over the last 7,000 years, how we live on the earth has been changing rapidly. Our bodies are effected by our environment in the same way it was 10,000 years ago, yet our influence on the earth has been accelerating at almost exponential levels. In our excitement and creativity, we are creating wonderful new environments that in many ways are proving to be toxic for us. It's like we have been given the keys to the candy store; our eyes popping out of our heads with all the possibilities and our bodies reeling from the sugar rush.

We can decide how we effect the world around us, but we cannot always decide how the world will effect us. We must understand this relationship and work with it for we are a part of it. If we reject this, we can find ourselves disconnected with our environment and ill; if we work with this, we can bring balance and harmony back into our lives.

A teacher of mine once said that if we were to study only one thing it would be the human being, because within the human being is contained all of the forms of the world around us. All of the beauty, harmony and wisdom of the natural world around us is living within our bodies. We are a living manifestation of the natural world and can experiencing this at every moment. Developing a strong and intimate relationship with the earth, through its forms and rhythms, helps us to understand who and what we are and how to live in harmony. Even in the most hostile environments, we can draw upon this relationship to find harmony and balance.

However, many people today were brought up within an environment that did not expose them to the natural world and they are finding themselves without the inner compass to help them navigate through the hazards of modern society. By working with natural forms, like plants, or animals, we can experience anew the wonders of creation that live in the world and within us. We can see the simple beauty and the vast wisdom that exists simultaneously in all around us. The gesture of each living thing which we attempt to draw, paint or sculpt comes to life within us as well. As we focus our attention on their forms, more is revealed to us that we normally would have missed in our busyness. A world reveals itself that we never knew existed as new capacities unfold within us.

This exploration continues as we start to look to the inner gestures. How do these things live and react within their environment, in relationship with other plants and animals? By sculpting or painting these, we start to bring forth experiences within us. This now exposes us to another level, a deeper level that is at work within the world, and also within us. It shows us that life is not passive, but has an effect upon and a reaction to everything around it.

A final step we can do is to observe the world as it unfolds, not in little snapshots, or

sound-bites, but as an epic tale filled with great wisdom. Guiding the unfolding of every living thing on earth are great archetypal forms that we may see when we bring an open imagination over a period of time. If you observe a particular plant once a day, or visit a certain place regularly, you will begin to recognize patterns in how things unfold and to develop a sense for how these rhythms can be found within us. When we can see the world in this way, with all its magic and wonders before us, we can experience the world not as a lonely place but as a great celebration.

Through these practices we can bring ourselves back into a relationship with our environment, and ourselves, that is more harmonious and insightful. This relationship can help us to understand what is making us ill and what we need to do to bring healing. This is important for everyone - healers, educators, the sick, the healthy and humankind as a whole. We need to understand who we are and how we are effected by the world around us, then maybe, we can create a healthy world again.

Greg Scott

Greg Scott has been an educator in the Waldorf School system for the past fifteen years and involved in the Fine Arts for over twenty-five. He holds degrees in History, Sculpture, Waldorf Education as well as many individual trainings. His experiences have taken him to over four continents, and he is currently living in British Columbia where he is developing programs for adolescents, youth at risk and other therapeutic initiatives.