

Metaphysics of Dialogic Expression

Jonny Drury



"I make visual artworks in the spaces between the hidden and manifest, as a seeker of ever-new shapes and letterforms, in timeless nether-worlds of symbols and words of undiscovered meaning." (2019)

The caption introduces my visual art website. I was trained to write like this on my Contemporary Fine Art degree, where I was also introduced to Bohm Dialogue.

I began my writing and graphical art journey as a young child, in love with, and capable of, good handwriting, and adults noticed. Later I was obsessively drawn to the eye-catching designs of rock band logos, while immersed in their sonic temples, I paid homage by drawing them and soon embroidering on the back of denim jackets for me then for other local boys for payment, my first business! As a young adult, while fully engaged with Islamic mysticism I learned to read Arabic. Short courses in Art & Design, Manuscript Calligraphy, Gilding, Environmental Graphics and sign-work supported a small business producing artisan Islamic plaques on exotic wood and gold on vellum for living spaces and

had a couple of exhibitions. I showed people how to select one of the Names of God and have a relationship with its meaning as they painted it. Large scale work on mosque walls followed, at the same time as making and installing shop facias around Sheffield. I embarked on several retreats and pilgrimages abroad, receiving lots of inspiration from Eastern art.



Gouache painting inspired by Bohm's theory of Implicate Order. This reminded a female friend of an ultrasound scan, for me raising the question, 'is mother-embryo communication the primordial human dialogue?'

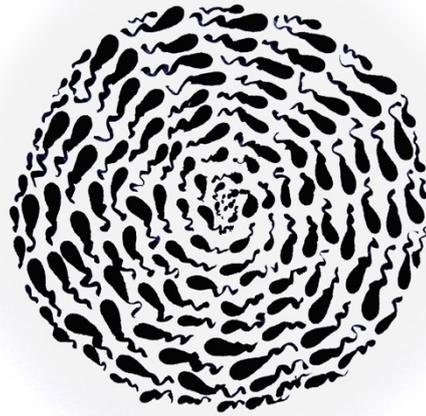
Whether squirrel-hair brushes for heraldry, gold-leaf gilding on vellum or black ink calligraphy on handmade parchment or vellum, the traditional ways of sophisticated mark-making and graphical artistry have immense tactile appeal for me and hold a deep magical presence in their materiality and processes, even before manifesting a work.

In 2009 on a Contemporary Fine Art BA, I chose to spend the whole first year trying to unite my inner and outer worlds with oils and a single 1.2m square canvas, which was to be a painful personal process. But I had the opportunity to dive into live art, presence and intersubjectivity, which led to being introduced to Bohm Dialogue. My final degree piece was the documenting of being directly engaged with people in the town, intervening in their lives in various ways, some ways seen as more disruptive than others.

I'd had some training in storytelling, counselling and mediation but dialogue is different in that it taps directly into the mechanisms of sense-making and conveyance and even beyond that, a form of cosmic collective communication. I refer to cosmological symbols such as the Pen and the Guarded Tablet, in Islam, and in creation stories that are often divine dialogues, for example between Allah and Muhammad in the Celestial Conversation and the Hadith, and between Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva in the Upanishads. Bohm's quantum science and my mystical learning experiences were coming together in 2008. During one session of about eight students and lecturers, I had the experience of witnessing what I can only describe as a large 'bubble of intuitive energy' hovering over our circle, enveloping us all at the same time, accompanied by a feeling of total congruence and love. After this major turning point, I was to incorporate Dialogue into creative self-discovery workshops for refugees and home-schooled children, working with the concept of gallery as learning space, funded by the European government.

After a further burst of colour, in 2017 I settled into black paint and inks in a return to the foundations of writing and communication. Intrigued by a diagnosis of Asperger's and when I saw how much disparity of views there are in autism, I began working with Dialogue in the community. I wanted to do something formal and lasting, so formed Dialogica.

I have spells of intense artmaking, usually lasting a few weeks. A valuable piece of practical advice I was given at university was that anyone working in any creative field should have their own creative practice to keep personal expression and self-communication strong. This and the phrase 'Start wherever you are' has proved priceless for me in making art.



"There is no Other." Ink on paper (2019).

My visual art and dialogue practices are merging to produce an expanding new body of work. My lifework is all about creating and sense-making for myself and others using art, dialogue and coaching and opening up deep inner spaces for all of this. I recently came up with a concept for a meditation practice called Dialogue Without Words. I offer weekly sessions and have produced some talks about this on my YouTube channel. I combine traditions including Sufism, Taoism and Advaita.

In the context of the divine principle of creating, I offer a word for people who utter "I can't paint or draw" - *Don't*. Take up a tool and make some marks. The process is the product, much like dialogue.

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