

Social Art and the Deep Self
with Deborah and Tom Ravetz – 27-30 March 2014
Digest of Participant Comments

A prepared space

- Conversations and emails gave us confidence that there was a lot of consciousness around the prepared events.
- The combining of forces by including the Society and the Christian Community was also inspiring.
- The mixture of Social Sculpture and lectures was a good balance.
- The space you [Deborah] created – it comes from your soul; such a work of art, love and patience which in the end includes many souls on their journey. It really created something beautiful and warm and trusting which was key to the whole day.

Our community

- A hub of activity rather than the last stop of a journey.
- A dynamic engaged and searching community.
- We felt we were part of a process rather than a one off event.
- The struggles around the community were brought up which we found important and healthy.
- This model of Hesperus with its active preparation group for cultural renewal activities is an inspiration which we will take home with us.

Meeting qualities

- There was deep engagement from the participants who were also supportive to each other.
- People shared from their souls in such an intimate way which you never pushed anyone to do. (I have not seen people in that large a group share so personally here before). In fact, you were willing to share intimately but also shared on a basic level so that was perhaps the platform for the variety of sharing.
- I felt overwhelmed with sadness after reading 3 stories. I then decided to stop and try not to think about anything while I waited for the others. I regained my composure and felt a kind of cathartic joy after another 15 minutes.
- The overall theme of Social Art and the Search for the Deep Self spoke very loudly to me and I enjoyed sharing the day with such a wonderful group of curious and authentic people....the key to our human becoming
- The contrast in the styles of the two presenters created an oscillating effect for me. On Friday evening, I found that I needed to engage my will in order to stay present. This seemed appropriate, in light of the lecture. What resonated with me since then has been to take this same attention and to use it when meeting others; noticing, asking and hearing the other.
- I found the sharing within such a large group challenging, yet one could sense the openness of heart and support from Deborah and the group which allowed this to happen.
- Celebrating together on Sunday at the church was a beautiful way to end the weekend. Thank you.
- blessedly refreshing. Sitting beside you, feeling the passion you have for your work radiating so warmly outward to us all was inspiring. It is rare to listen to another be so fearlessly open in revealing the struggles overcome in the search for the deep self; and, then, to take it so much further to being a guiding force for others to do so as well.

- Impression and Expression are the two poles of shaping. I come forward, outward, with expression, and you may receive me, hopefully without judgement. I thank you for receiving my expression, receiving it as an imprint. I receive thankfully, and with as much re-membling in me as I can muster, your impress on me...SOCIAL SCULPTURE.
- dissolving the boundaries between macrocosm and microcosm
- inner and outer spaces warmed in a very effectual and meaningful way. It felt like so many individuals were present – able to share from whatever place they were at – a circle was created which could include great diversity and honesty and openness. A very promising circle.
- It was important to eat together.
- It was impressive how far some had travelled and that they stayed for such a long event.

Working themes

Threefold self. selfish...selfless...deep self

- What has continued to resonate with me is Deborah's finding that a group initiative is doomed if any member of the group is motivated by fame over dedication to the pursuit at hand. This reminds me of the Jewish saying in Ethics of the Fathers, "One who pursues greatness, greatness will flee from him," but I had not thought of this principle in terms of group dynamics before
- What seems to be showing through is a picture of deep self as conjoined spirit self, with the atomistic self as a kind of epidermis that gets sloughed off. Deep self is intimately connected to deep other and neither is about pursuit of acclaim.

Hidden, Ignored, Denied

- As long as we as individuals do not look at our own "hidden, ignored and denied" issues, we will not move forward as a community. If we stay stuck in our old ways and don't dare to jump, we will not change anything. Only if we make ourselves vulnerable will we make progress. To face our own vulnerability is incredibly difficult for us, it requires such courage and strong will and not everyone is able to do take the important first step. It was very interesting to see this even already during the workshop. Individuals who were able to muster up enough courage to overcome their own inhibitions seemed liberated afterwards. And yet, that is what we have to aim for if we want to become a true community: we have to come to a point where we can trust each other enough so that we can be vulnerable. Only from a place of vulnerability can we become truly human and recognize the Christ in the other and in ourselves. Only then can true community come about - how wonderfully enriching, nourishing and fulfilling that would be!
- Find something of ourselves in the lovely souls surrounding us and as we shared about them; we were helped to find our own ways to change which were through finding the "hidden, ignored and denied"
- Reflect on what is hidden, denied and forgotten; such that that deep self - both individual and social - would not be sorely compromised and unexpressed.
- One particular image that arises for me from the process is that of the window-cleaner who wipes away the debris of bad habit and inclement weather, to reveal a clear and shiny possibility.
- This type of work could be oriented ahead of time to addressing a particular issue in our wider community - such as the issue of the land sale. It is a pity in some ways for us to be awoken to the the notion of the hidden, the denied, the forgotten, whilst entrapped by the very same repressive and short-sighted energy, in our acute and controversial midst.

- Almost by definition, "hidden", "ignored", "denied" are items we don't easily bring out and share, do we!?

Love and Power

- I keep thinking of the degenerative things I say; when I do not speak the truth because I do not want to hurt someone. the whole reason our communities are so much in pain!...

Installation of images and distilled biographies

- At the core, Deborah Ravetz's natural bearing and personal/poetic introduction to the evening's centrepiece—an of famous and unfamous individuals presented side-by-side on two of the room's walls. We were encouraged to approach as many of the images and stories as we were drawn to, and in no particular order. An air of reverence accompanied us as we moved, each at his/her own pace, engaging with the pieces as individuals in the company of others. This part of the encounter came to a quiet close when the last man returned to his seat. We were then asked to share responses in pairs before returning to the circle for group sharing. The flow of the evening was gentle and unencumbered, even as it gave rise to some very emotional moments and striking insights.
- I appreciated thinking about how destiny, including painful destiny, can help us step into a fuller aspect of our true being.
- Deborah's approach seems to meet one more at the feeling level. What echoed within me after reading many of the stories was that there seemed an archetypal quality to them. Although I had not the same personal experiences as those I read, I could relate to many of the struggles I felt in others' search in finding the true self.
- Acknowledging the human beings against the wall behind us. (editor's emphasis)
- Social Art was created through the deep respect that was nurtured, warmed, in each of us by these truthful stories of the people who surrounded us.

What happens next?

- Returning to our own Thornhill stories and dramas, I feel daunted. (A powerful – and potentially productive – emotion!) Can I begin clearly to see adversary powers, and to acknowledge the critical parts they play in my life? Can I now start to LIVE my story – not just live out my allotted time?
- Let's listen to each other more, neighbour.
- It gave me lots of food for thought (and future action).
- Our task now is to find ways to encourage ourselves and others to begin ...
- I am game to try this some more!
- I sense that perhaps we need to slow down, to listen to ourselves, to each other, to the community.
- I had a sense of a group wanting to be active and respond to life with hope and effort and that this is making something happen in the wider community.
- There is a sense of future and of building using social tools and inner effort.
- One suggestion I would like to offer would be to consider adding an art activity done together. This would have made for a nice balance to all of the discussing and sharing. By the end of Saturday, I felt the need for movement and the making of something together.
- it would have been better to break into groups of, say, 12, not larger, so that more intimate expression could take place, less dependent on verbalized concepts (and being able to hear). It

would have allowed each person more time to communicate in his/her group. This session was not as clearly directed as I would have liked, I felt.

Coda

Perhaps surprisingly, one of the most inspiring things to work toward as a priest of The Christian Community is the hope that one day our task will be unnecessary. Yes, unnecessary! This would mean that every human encounter would be an encounter with the Divine. 'Sacramentalism' would be so deeply understood and practiced that life itself would become revelation- every experience, every human meeting would be a revelation of God- a Sacrament. Deborahs' work is a real step toward this hope. Her social sculpture and artistic presentation on becoming a self was so inspiring because it was one of the only times that I truly experienced art as sacrament- the artist as priest. Why? In each human story she gathered, she carefully but organically revealed the all important moments of death and resurrection, moments of dying and becoming, where we decide to totally let go of what we have been, what we had thought and imagined as how things should be and opened up to something radically new. For those with 'ears to hear and eyes to see' these are revelations of how Christ actually lives and works in our lives. He is this activity of dying and becoming in us. In this light, her whole artistic experience then becomes a revelation of Christ in us. Her canvas becomes an altar. Thank you Deborah for helping us take another step towards transforming our human existence into a place to know and see Him in all things.