

What Lies Beneath

A midwinter immersion in eco-printing, shamanic practice and therapeutic arts inquiry culminating in a group exhibition.

The Conceptual Framework



Eco-printing

Eco-printing is a form of natural dyeing utilising botanical matter, metal, water, heat and close contact to create prints upon a surface. We will be working with the mediums of cotton rag paper, silk, wool and leather.

As a process, it invites collaboration and staying with the unknown, waiting to find out what is revealed in the unbundling.

Shamanic Practice

Shamanic Practice involves paying attention to the outer world in order to know more about the inner world. In this journey, we will be attending to the eco-system we find ourselves in, including the cycling of the moon, the seasons, our bodies, interpersonal dynamics, the eco-printed bundles and our own creativity.



A shaman then, is a gateway between the worlds, an embodied consciousness of this ever-present dialogue between the realms, between all things. In this form of practice, we experience the dye pot or cauldron as Shaman, sitting in circle as Shaman, and all within our field of experiencing, including one another, as pathways through the veil.

We can also see the cycles of the moon, the seasons, our bodies, our lives, as microcosms of the macrocosm of the cosmos we find ourselves in, each a map informing the other. Fractals of the 'World in a Grain of Sand' of which Blake writes. And yet each map, though a structure that holds us, is completely open to the emergence of each present moment. This form of shamanism is descriptive, not predictive.

Therapeutic Arts Inquiry

In this series of workshops we will be adapting the MIECAT form of inquiry. MIECAT is a post-graduate institution that has developed a set of procedures for arts-based, multi-modal inquiry. This methodology involves maintaining a descriptive rather than interpretative attitude, staying with what emerges in the present moment rather than focusing on outcome, noticing felt body responses, and staying open to the collaborative intersubjective nature of the inquiry.

The intersubjective position views us as both subjective and objective, as mediated through our embodiment. Another way to see this is as being both the perceived and the perceiver. David Abram, in *The Spell of the Sensuous* writes,

“To touch the coarse skin of a tree is thus, at the same time, to experience one’s own tactility, to feel oneself touched by the tree. And to see the world is also, at the same time, to experience oneself as visible, to feel oneself see... We can experience such things- can touch, hear and taste things – only because, as bodies, we are ourselves included in the sensible field, and have our own textures, sounds, and tastes. We can perceive things at all only because we ourselves are entirely a part of the sensible world we perceive! We might as well say that we are organs of this world, flesh of its flesh, and that the world is perceiving itself through us.” (p. 68)



Our art-making, be it gesture, sound, movement, installation, drawing, poetic, eco-printing etc., provides a framework to focus on this perceiver/perceived reality, to attend to the irreducible boundaries between self and other, where Other may be inhabited by prints generated, felt or embodied senses, the leaves, metals, rusts, pots, strings, paper and water, and artists working alongside us.

Self is necessary and vital in the collaborative process; a participant not to be cleansed away. Self is an experiencing subject shaping the Other, who in turn shapes Self. Together in these workshops, we will explore self as a collaborator but not a director, engaging in an emerging process to come to know something new, and pay attention to one’s experience in that space.

We have grown so accustomed to the idea of the solitary and wilful creator that we find it difficult to see the deeper ecology of creation.

- Shaun McNiff

The Fusion

The melting pot of these elements – eco-printing, shamanic practice and therapeutic arts inquiry – invites a paying attention to matter in order to experience its sacredness.

In this collaborative framework, we understand sacredness as simply the paying attention to what is present in order to access what lies beneath the surface of our conscious knowing – the embodied knowing.

This is both the shamanic way as well as the way of arts-based inquiry, where something significant may be drawn out of the seemingly mundane. In our framework, everything is of significance and invites a collaboration in our meaning making, our understanding of our ways of being in the world.

We will be unashamedly using the lens of the female embodied experience as a valuable pathway and process, but this is but only one of many maps or containers, holding our emergence, and the invitation to dive into this journey is open all gender expressions.



Flow concerns the capacity to engage with the “other” in such a way that the perceived boundaries of the self are no longer in focus, but rather, the focus is more on the energy of the engagement.

- Jan Allen

The Journey

This series of workshops and exhibition will take place at Burrinja Arts and Cultural Centre in Upwey, in the Black Box theatre.



Workshop One:

Friday 3 June, 6 to 9pm

Saturday 4th & Sunday 5th June, 10am to 5pm

What Lies Beneath will begin under a dark moon, a time in the lunar cycle akin to winter, yin energy, the unconscious, the feminine. We will be coming into the festival of Yule, which marks the Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year – a perfect setting for exploring what is gestating beneath!

We will gather in circle, as we have done for centuries, to embark on this descent in sacred ceremony, and to become known to each other. As part of this time, we will undertake a drum journey, which is like a meditation, guided by the beat of the drum, in which we can access our inner knowing in a non-rational way.

We can see this time in our journey as the point of conception, the sowing of a seed full of unknown potential.



The next two days will be not unlike the experience of gestation and pregnancy: questions of curiosity and playfulness, a wondering about what will emerge as we spend time immersed in eco-printing, bundling, waiting and unwrapping.

Multi-modally, we will document our journey and the thread of curiosity we might follow. We will establish self-care plans for ourselves to metaphorically midwife ourselves through our journeys. We will work with procedures that will support us in these articulations and help us integrate what we are coming to know into our lived experience. We will also tend to a collective cauldron of wisdom, an ongoing dye pot that we are all invited to contribute to and draw from during our time together. We will circle up in smaller mutual care groups.

By the end of Sunday we will have arrived at “approximations of meaning,” a thread of knowing to carry into the following weekend.



Workshop Two:

*Saturday 11th & Sunday 12th June
10am to 5pm*

Over this weekend we will be working with the collaborators of the previous workshop – prints, leaves, metals, images, movements, video footage, journaling and poetry to begin a construction of what we are coming to know about *what lies beneath*.

It is likely that the exciting feelings of generation and embarking that may have been experienced the previous weekend, may come to a head with the feeling of creative block: *what do I do with all this stuff? where to from here? how do I move forward?*

This phase of the journey could be likened to the final pathways towards birth, the experience of being on a vision quest or the metamorphosis within a chrysalis, calling us to trust the process, stay with the chaos, and let go. *When it appears that all is disintegrating, can I trust in my becoming?*



We will utilise the wisdom gained in the previous workshop, draw from the cauldron of collective wisdom and our mutual care groups and continue to pay attention to what is being generated in the present moment. All the way along, we will be anchoring the pearls of knowing as they arise. You are invited to bring along sewing machines, other tools and anything else you think you may need for your making.

By the end of this weekend we will have a sense of our works in progress for the exhibition and what will be required for their hanging.

We will also consider how the public who engages with our work may respond intersubjectively and continue the co-creation during the exhibition, allowing for a flow, a dialogue between self and other.



It is in the making of something that is in-between the visible and the invisible that a person becomes. And in making something an individual contributes to what is in the world and therefore becomes connected.

- Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Curatorial Day:

Tuesday 5th July, 10am to 3pm

Having just passed the Winter Solstice, the days will be getting slightly longer, and we will be bringing to light the seeds we have nurtured within ourselves and within the womb-space of the workshops!

On this day artists will bring their works to the gallery for hanging. Each artwork will need to be accompanied by an artist's statement. We will all participate in curating the space, both our solo works and that which has been collaboratively generated. These works will reveal *the way* of the journey, inviting a dance with process rather than a focus on outcome. Works may include video footage, soundscapes, journals, prints in process, spent leaves, framed works, garments etc.



Opening Night:

Thursday 7th July, 6 to 9pm

The exhibition will open, and run until Sunday 7th August. This is an opportunity for us to invite people along to witness our creative journeys and celebrate with us. Because this is a midwinter exploration, it is possible that works may still sit in the “not-knowing,” on the edges, tentative and ephemeral. The gift and the challenge of this most visible point may be the showcasing and treasuring the not-yet-complete, the in-process and staying with becoming. Fundamentally, this offers a challenge to outcome-oriented paradigms, validating and celebrating the offerings of each stage of the creative cycle.

Closing Circle:

Friday 12th August, 6 to 9pm

This circle, situated near Imbolc – the time of quickening before Spring blooms, gives us the chance to look backwards over our journey and what we have come to know, and perhaps look forward to a little of the growth we may have seen coming from our midwinter gestation.

In this outreach from the making and ‘being seen,’ we will share our experiences and consider “where to from here?” We will also collect our artworks and share the Oracle cards we have generated collaboratively along the way. We will celebrate our becoming and unearthing with sweet treats and bubbly drinks!!



What to bring

A journal set aside for this journey

Sustenance: lunches, treats and teas

a blanket

a drink bottle

Gifts of the season of winter- bones and skins, cocoons etc. – what does the theme evoke in you?

Everything necessary for the making will be provided however people often feel called to personalise the collaboration by bringing along:

- leaves from their garden
- rusted nails from their farm
- their grandmothers silk dress to dye etc.,

Extra materials for artworks will available for purchase



Payment

\$590 early bird price- up until 31st March

\$700 waged by 15th of May

\$620 unwaged by 15th of May

Payment must be made by 15th of May to the commencement of the workshops to secure your place. Payment plans can be arranged through the box office at Burrinja.

<http://www.burrinja.org.au/theatre/booking-tickets>