

A person wearing a dark hat and a light-colored poncho with a dark geometric pattern is looking out over a body of water. The background shows a shoreline with trees and a bright sky. A large, semi-transparent geometric pattern, consisting of a central circle with radiating lines and a central square, is overlaid on the person's poncho.

ACTIVE IMAGINATION

LEARNING THRU ART  
a PERSONAL approach to imaginal research

# PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

An Art-Based Research Application; Dive into the Deep

## BE IMAGINATIVE

Active imagination is a way  
of knowing through the cre-  
ative NATURE of  
the SOUL.



Imagination  
is our  
creative  
SUPER  
POWER

## ACTIVE IMAGINATION SAMPLE

Art-Based Methodology; Imaginal Research in a Personal Practice

Active imagination is probably the primary new skill that you will be acquiring in this creative undertaking. It is a new old skill, however, since all of us possessed an active imagination in our youth. As children we played with images in our imagination and yet this is a lost art--repressed as we grew older. Part of what we are doing in beginning this practice is returning to our root in childhood to reclaim or rediscover what brings our creativity to life.

"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he (or she) grows up." Pablo Picasso

The trick is to return to the creative root and discover its source. What activates your imagination? I remember playing in the forest with moss building homes and being lost in the creative FLOW of designing and making costumes. What did you do that took you out of space and time? The SOUL is not bound by space and time (and neither are we on that level), so a great way to remember what brings to life or activates your soul is to return to the things that induced a sense of timeless WONDER. What did you love to do as a child? It may be awkward, but skip, dance, dream, sing . . . whatever brought you to that transcendent place.

GO THERE.

# AN IMAGINAL EXPERIENCE; A DESCENT

Being taken back to the original experience of the soul

Whether it is a painting or a saying, this is art that will remain unrefined or unfinished. It is not meant to be completed because that would be to stop changing and evolving, living and growing: dead. This is art as a process not a product. It is also personal. For this reason and because I am still too close to the center and the depth of my experience, I have a hard time being with art of my dissertation and not having it take me back to the original experience. This is good in the sense that Jung painted to remember and access these imaginal experiences and remember their numinous energy. Sometimes this effect of art is called a MEMORY ANCHOR.

In this section I am going to communicate my experiences with the art-based process. While you won't remember the painting and active imagination, sharing them will help (hopefully) to illustrate and animate Jung's statement that the artist was collective humanity. So, the paintings were translated in inner images in a way that spoke to the collective more than the personal.

In this sense, it is my hope that they can provide a door or at least a window to see into the depths of the process. My experience with the paintings was that they were created and viewed through me.

IN THIS PROCESS. YOU BEGIN TO BECOME TRANSPARENT TO YOUR SOUL, LEARNING TO SEE AND SEE THROUGH YOUR SOUL AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL LENS.

Immersed in the experiences, I really felt that I was in them and I actually identified as an explorer on behalf of collective humanity. Now I feel more like myself, an introvert who already has layers of wounding around difference and being "out on the bell curve," as my husband is fond of saying. For these reasons, I have decided to give a short sample of the active imagination and narrate around it to help you understand the process.

THIS IS DEEP AND DIFFERENT WORK. It is almost magical and the voice that emerges sometimes doesn't feel like your own. Just witness in these moments without judgement. There is a saying that the mind is the slayer of the REAL. Don't kill the living image by judging it. Let it BE and observe. This process is about seeing through the imagination by holding it as real--real in its affect. Just as when we see something it has an affect on us (both psychological and physical), imagination affects us. It is a way of knowing and growing through images as reality.



JUNG would  
dialogue with  
the images ...  
to consciously  
understand



"Every great artist gives birth to a new universe,  
in which the familiar things look the way they  
have never before looked to anyone"

Rudolf Arneim

# AUTOMATIC WRITING - REAL NOTES

As a last note of my introduction to the active imagination sample, I have decided (and feel called) to introduce the material with some explanation. In reading TRB we have extensive notes and an introduction by Shamdasani to help bridge to Jung's material, and I want to offer a bridge as well. Though Jung's soul condemned scholarly defining and explaining in TRB, she seemed to advocate bridging through experience, so I feel comfortable with this approach. The ability to contextualize the material will also help me to make it comprehensible to the viewer. Written hastily in automatic writing and then transcribed, the notes of my active imagination are really notes. They need further elaboration beyond what I could document in the moment.



Theory gave birth to a practice ... "a living and self-existing being."

## SAMPLE ACTIVE IMAGINATION

While Jung elaborated and polished his writing through the Black Books and in the editing of TRB over sixteen years I have not done this work and do not feel called to. For me the textual element of the dissertation art is an elaboration of the visual images (which are an elaboration of the original visionary experience), and they will continue to shift and evolve over time. So far, my primary distinguishing characteristic and ethic regarding structure has been that nothing is to be fixed or static. All of the pieces are meant to move. From the three-ring binder that allowed me to engage repeatedly with the text and rearrange it, to the paintings that were not bound in a book, everything was designed to be in motion. So, I will give you the first image which is fixed as the beginning point. I will attach this image as well as the second image referenced here at the end.

I have decided to begin in the beginning where people who are starting their own applications of the process will start. This place is the most distinct and static for me, and it is also a time that feels safer in terms of sharing content. In my process I would meditate in a set location to induce a vision, similar to Jung's induction of hypnogogic vision with his patients. I would then go immediately and sketch out a composition that evolved what I thought of a visual thought or teaching. By this I mean that the vision was an experience with sensory data, but I also sensed that the vision had meaning behind or within it.

While the visions also had emotion and Jung said that he was trying to get at the emotion behind the images, I was more explicitly drawn to bring out or paint the meaning that I sensed. It was as if the painted experiences were a curriculum that I received and recorded, translating it through the lens of my own interpretation and understanding. After experiencing and sketching a vision, I would add enough color and weight that I felt I had captured or contained the sense of the teaching enough that when I came back to the images, I would be able to get in touch with the evolving energy of the experience and work with it. At that point, I would often leave the painted image and either work on an earlier image or start another image composition from a vision. In this way, not only the viewing but the painting of the imaginal experiences wove themselves together. (I will admit that this may be a part of my own way of processing in which I do everything simultaneously together.) Again, this seamless nature of my process is part of why I am starting at the beginning.

# ACTIVE IMAGINATION: an archetypally personal way to dialogue with the soul in images

Having experienced a number of visions and started to paint them in remembering how to learn through art, I felt that it was time to begin my active imagination--to activate and talk to the art. I began to engage my soul through the art. Like your art, this will reflect you and the communication of your soul. For me, this started with the introduction of seven tarot cards which provided the key to the structure of the dissertation imagery. Through these cards I realized that all of my paintings were to be laid out conceptually like a tarot card reading up the tree of life--returning to past traditions that taught (in a gnostic or inner sense) through art. (I was not a tarot reader previously).

Mapping onto the two most prominent and long-standing visual teaching traditions (tarot and tree) my art then seemed comprehensible to me as a whole. Perhaps for this reason, I was called to begin my active imagination with the Empress card, the second tarot card that I painted and a card that was associated with the enthroned feminine and insight. This card is the highest feminine card up the tree and is often seen as a card that cycles back down to the beginning or root again to another feminine. While this makes conceptual sense now to me, at the time I did not think or know this. I was merely responding to the images. Here, I will note that I created an atmosphere in my studio that was a bit of an altered space. When I went into my art studio it felt like entering the imagery in the sense of active imagination. In retrospect, I believe that this was an intermediate step in bringing my psychology of sight into the world in which I can now engage reality in a different way—at least the reality of art and nature in my studio and retreat center.

In the charged space of my art studio (my creative CONTAINER), I felt that I was already inside the threshold of the numinous which helped me to paint and do the active imagination in a way that held the original energy of the visions. Upon entering this space, after the realization that I should begin my active imagination dialogues with the images, I sat with those that I had started and felt into them to see who wanted to speak (I get this may feel awkward, but it really does work). The Empress came up, and I will include the verbatim transcription of that experience. This experience can be seen as an example of how the artwork worked on and with me.

The following is my experience of viewing or engaging a painting—or it engaging me. Again, it is not refined into a work of art but can be seen as a rough and hasty sketch made during the experience in which I wrote as fast as I could to record the inner events. As a final preface to the detail of my experience, I ended up walking right out of the picture to the left without engaging any of the painted elements (including the empress). In this way it was like the painting was an initial threshold or portal to enter and move through. This experience happened a lot of times, and I moved through one painting into another at times—almost always through chthonic tunnels or caves.



**"All the works  
of man have their  
origin in creative  
fantasy."  
CG JUNG**

# AN ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

I am taken aback and ask, "Who are you?"

## The Empress; We Begin

I enter the image and go around back into the purple mountain and there is a tunnel entrance to a cave. I go in and there is a dripping sound and I follow it in relative darkness. I follow the sound to the back. It becomes quiet and I sense an echo in the expansive hollow of the space. The echo feels like the reverberation of time. As I go back I feel that I am walking backwards in time, but into greater light not darkness, into daylight—sunlight.

I exit the cave into a sunlit clearing and see and feel the play of dancing light like butterflies but with a sense of forboding. I am captured by arms, suddenly around my waist and I feel a head by my head, a voice that is speaking with the mind. Someone that knows me. That has waited for me. Relax he says, thought it felt like menace. He lets go and I turn. I have been afraid feeling it is MZ, but I turn, and it is now a smallish blond man of indefinite age, maybe ageless but seeming also young. He has turned and walked away like a stroll and I follow him. It feels like his hands are behind his back, like I am totally free, hands off. I follow slowly as he glances to the left. He comes and stops by a stream and pats a place next to him for me. He says, "Well, how shall we do this?"

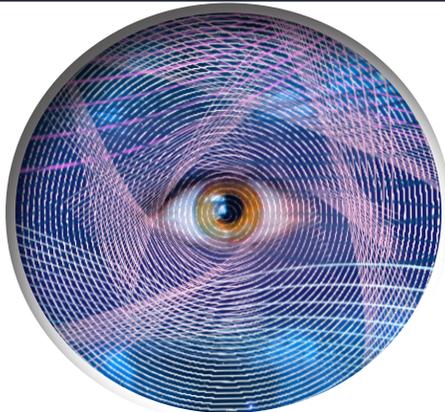
I don't know," I say. He smiles, and I know he is my guide for this journey, an animus figure, how funny. I didn't see that coming. I thought this was an all-woman project. I wonder why I am here, coming through the cave in the painting. It is neutral ground and it is his ground. He is a sprite or nature spirit like a pixie (whatever that is). His energy is playful to mischievous, but he is also serious. I feel he has something to say.

"I am sent to work with you. You've got this all wrong, not the art, but the brain stuff and the attitude. You need to relax. Feel my energy. Feel the energy of this place. It is free, it is happy. Feel the laughing of light. It is weightless. You need to come here."

The images are not what you think, or what they seem. They are doorways -points of entry. Each time you are somewhere else through the door.



Is it a part of me? It is your fairy tale, he says.  
I am about to ask who I am, but I know I play all the parts.



**“What right  
have we then  
to depreciate the  
imagination.”  
CG JUNG**



Inwardly I thought this would be dealing with darkness, and he said, “Light is needed for darkness. Come.” He shows me a dark forest with low trees and branches. It looks witchy or scraggy, unhealthy. “Yes,” he says, “It is the archetypal scary forest. We will enter tomorrow. Come back and he indicates a place where two paths meet.

I am taken aback and ask, “Who are you?”

“I am Titchchen.”

I ask (because to think something in this space is to ask it):

“Is this [whole process of the dissertation art and working with him] going to be worthwhile?”

“You are going to have to trust and not judge,” he says.

“What is the forest,” I ask.

“Something, someone is trapped in the forest,” he said. “They need help.”

“Is it a part of me?” I ask.

“Everything is a part of something—the same thing.”

“This feels like a fairy tale,” I say.

“It is your fairy tale,” he says.

I am about to ask who I am, but I know I play all the parts.

“Are you an elf?” I ask.

“Yes and no.”

“Are my thoughts going to be jumping around like this the whole time?” I ask.

“No, it is like a body you will learn to control. How you learn is a part of what you learn.”

I want to know what is in the forest. It feels like the bramble in my heart. It is.

“Draw the bramble, and I will work on it with you tomorrow,” he says.

“Good night” and he transforms into mist and then twilight stars and a glow of lights.

This is the entry in my journal for the active imagination (made more intelligible with quotations), and I included a small commentary afterward. This was a pattern or habit in which I would record my experience and then make a note of my experience of my experience, if that makes sense. So, at the bottom of the first experience I wrote: The images are not what you think or what they seem. They are doorways—points of entry. Each time you are somewhere else through the door.

After this journal entry I went and meditated on my heart bramble and painted my visionary experience with this inner image which was like an impenetrable briar patch around my heart that restricted my breathing and love. In the vision reflecting on the briar I went to what I experienced as a past life in which I was burnt in a town square of packed dirt with a small village of meager houses. It was grimy and charged with fear, anger, and sweat. This was one vignette in which I experienced my death.

As Jung advised Elijah at the end of TRB, “It [the multiple soul] is not to be thought; it is to be viewed. It is a painting.”



# I AM ALRIGHT. I AM.

Notably, I have experienced a number of past life visions all of which were of my deaths. In these visions I feel removed from the scene and serene but also in the scene. It is like being in but not of the world. The second vignette was of a small child huddled and frightened in a tiny ramshackle cabin in the forest. The third was of a Church father figure, seated in regalia at a thick plank table with a stone window (no pane of glass) that looked out down a hill to a village.

He sat to the left facing right and he was resolute, reflecting inwardly on my death, how it was lamentable but necessary. He was stoic in his resolve and I knew that he was responsible for the ordering of my death. The images were relatively devoid of emotion (especially since I was being burned), and they were also fairytale like in their sense of symbolism and the time period.

Having given a contextualization for the vision and the art, I will now include my active imagination with the art that I created as the second painting I engaged with. It starts with a command. A voice tells me:

"You need to take responsibility as if it was you in the church-castle (the building seemed like both), as if the roles are reversed. That is real as well."

Entering the image, I go into the forest and to the cottage. I find the door hanging loose on its hinges and the room empty. The cottage is in disrepair with heavy moss on its roof and I go and sit in the corner on the floor on a mat-bed. I put my head in my hands and wonder/remember. What happened here? I look again at the painting. (I would repeatedly enter into the experience and then almost wake up or come back to consciousness and focus again on the image or painting throughout the process.) The child looks up at my former self. "It is alright," they tell me. "I am alright. I am A (my beloved child). Let go of me now. I am alright."

I think or envision the question, what is the sublimation of the funeral pyre? Wood burning, wood growing, wood that destroys. Wood that creates. Trees alive and dead.

Light the fire/pyre and burn away the dross. Clear away the dead wood, release the spirit from the form.

Looking again at the painting, I ask/think: why is the woman levitating?

Answer: her soul is in stasis. A part of you has been waiting, like the girl in the forest to be atoned, to be remembered. Bring her back, like a daughter, a child. She is floating, disembodied. Ground her in you. Remember and release the fear and horror.

**"Not all who  
wander are  
lost."  
TOLKIEN**

**"I am sent to work with you. You've got this all wrong, not the art, but the brain stuff and the attitude. You need to relax. Feel my energy. Feel the energy of this place. It is free, it is happy. Feel the laughing of light. It is weightless. You need to come here."**



## IMAGINAL KNOWING

Bypass the analytical mind and see what happens

In response, I remember the courtyard. The rabble of the people and things. The dirt and smoke. The grimy tears and sounds. Shuffling people. Awkward horror. Neighbors and town folks, strangers. A dirty place, dead packed earth underfoot, looking around for help. A dirty place. The false accusation and the one the pious believe.

I see that there is a luminous gem stone, a fragment of a soul (red?) in the girl that I am to gather. I need to bring her into myself. I enter through the heart of the young woman, my past incarnation, and then the heart. I feel it beating, a still beat that slows until I am one in the earth, with the sun with the stars. I am whole. I can forgive the people around me, the bishop, because I am connected to something else. The bramble around my heart burns and I am told to recreate a ritual the next day (by Titch) to release this blockage to my heart I the physical realm and to find a stone for the soul fragment of the girl. I look at the body in the painting, who is A, and I ask if there is anything he has to say.

"I love you. I look up to you, but I don't need you. In fact, I need you to let me go, to release me. Let both of us come back whole from this incarnation. I see and know that the man (know also in my life) is here, going to his knees in pleading relief for release. He is so sorry. He didn't know—though he thought he did. He is angry too, that I would hold him back in this incarnation. I let the flames consume me and I allow myself to burn to dust, to fly like sparks into the sky. I am free. Sparks and ash dust. Beautiful illuminated points that fade into the night sky.

It is done. I am gone and here, really here. I feel my heart and know that the girl (myself) is in my heart—she is also the abused girl from childhood memory. Know that A is with me and forgives me. (I felt so responsible.) And I look up to the heavens and forgive God and the man—the Father. This is a big deal. (I cry). I forgive the father. The Church, God, patriarchy. I, and women, I am witches. I as a mystic killed for my beliefs before. I, I, I, so many I's. It is all gone. It is just one. I who cannot be opposed to themselves.

In the stillness of the night there is forgiveness. It feels warm like dying embers, warm like blood. I make my sacrifice within and so I can accept it. I am hugged with the arms of my lost son and lost father. This is the masculine of my dissertation. I need to remember this masculine, a masculine of love. The one, the one that is consoled by remorse, that remembers so that I can not only forgive but forget.

In the stillness of the night there is forgiveness. It feels warm like dying embers, warm like blood. I make my sacrifice within and so I can accept it.

**"The soul never thinks without a mental picture."  
ARISTOTLE**

# WHERE ARE YOU IN THIS?

In the Apple. Do you not see?

This is good. I feel like crying and sleeping with my arms around the night, around the world. I take the gem from this incarnation like recovered treasure. I have access to it and it is with me now. I/we are whole, holy. One. I am one. I am not woman and man, mother and father. Husband, brother, father, son. They are me—only then will we be set free.

Hold the small stone enter in your heart . . . keep it with you to remind you, we are all connected in the heart through a seed of love. We are from the same seed. It is an ember of my sacrifice, of women's sacrifice, use it to start a new fire, to warm, to cook, and burn, to light the seasons.

Use image of small seed stone in the heart (sketched along with the words of the journal).

I look at the house, what do I do with this? It holds such pain, sorrow, and anger. I burn the thatch and it is released in a blaze like the release of spent tears. I can leave. I am no longer alone. I came in anger, pissed. I leave in calm surrender, hand in hand. My self, my son, and X (person in my life).

I say to the man, "X, I am tired of being on the outside. Whole we are whole. I want to come in. I respect you. I love you. Please let me in. I hold in my heart feeling the falling rain, drowning out the embers of rage with peace. I am saturated by the forgiveness of peace.

Again, looking at the painting. What about the apple?

Answer: The apples are a fruit. Eat the apples and let them seed the earth. The apples are the seed thoughts of the new age to be planted in the burnt field, tilled for tomorrow.

I plant an apple seed in AI and we walk away hand in hand. I have him, we are safe. I know him now. I can let go. It is only God that I still look to, that I have yet unfinished business with. Where were you in this?

Answer: In the apple. Do you not see the perfect planting cycle? It is planted in your heart. Reflect and water this seed with your attention. Grow in love and connection in ME. (No gender), me in ME.



**Jung's art-based process is about serving the soul in the world or the anima mundi.**



**Do you see the perfect planting cycle? It is planted in your heart. Reflect and water this seed with your attention. Grow in love and connection in ME. (No gender), me in ME.)**



## STATIC or DEAD; a principle of growth

This concludes the work on the Empress along with the second image, and it reminds me of the deeper reason why I am not ready to elaborate these pages into a finished and publishable work in this dissertation.

It is too personal, too emotional—not to mention too long. Critically, it is almost like I didn't feel the full weight of the emotion in the initial image and experience, projecting it instead into the paintings a form of processing but also a place to store the energy.

When I return to these images, I relive them with greater emotional clarity, abstracting or reclaiming part of the projection. Having just read through a number of my experiences again to determine what to do with them, I am reminded that it is emotionally exhausting and unreasonable to expect myself to do the work to dissipate these images. I feel that I would have to do this to make it public, and I am not ready. There are layers yet uncovered, and I need and deserve to take the time to process the material.

Finally, to publish the material also feels like it would make it static. Dead or stationary, the images would stop moving and evolving, individuating. This goes against the primary core value of dissertation which is a principle of growth, reflected in all of the elements of the dissertation's design.



find your way  
your myth  
your truth  
create your  
religion

## JUNG'S METHODOLOGY a seed to be planted - grow



Accordingly, I will just give this first seed image to be planted in the reader, as it was planted in me. I believe communicating the evolution of this image helps as a teaching point, which is the real purpose of this dissertation: to realize how this teaching can be taught to those in need. While each individual will find their own way, seeing my way of applying Jung's methodology may help others to imagine and find their own way.

As an example of how I learned through the images, I feel that the first lesson serves as a good instruction, and it is indicative of patterns that ran throughout my whole experience. Repeatedly in the active imagination with the images I was denied requests, told hard truths, turned inward in art, and often experienced cathartic release. I was given homework as well. Like in this first experience, I was told to paint a new painting, get a stone, create a ritual. In this way the painting and viewing of the art wove within my life.

# EMPRESS; the Soul's Directive symbolic of the right side of the brain

Finally, I hope that this retelling along with the inclusion of the images can give a lived sense of how the imaginal but three-dimensional, multi-sensory experience of the initial vision is translated into a two-dimensional composite of the imagery. In this process salient features of the image are overlaid to be seen as a time lapse of the event.

Quite often I experienced synchronicities and discoveries in the weaving of the inner and out images that corroborated or elaborated my imaginal research. For example, I found in my research that the Empress is symbolic of the right side of the brain and conducts the soul's directives. The questions of what is the power to awaken and become conscious and what sees all and yet has no words to decipher what is seen are associated with this card. Through this card and the inner state of consciousness it represents the lightning of the lightning path up the center of the tree of life is said to split the ego and its intellect and enter the body.

Associated with sight and vision as well, I see the Empress as a symbolic and visual teaching who reflects the lessons of my dissertation. Again, through looking at the images and hearing this narrative the hope is that you can get a more detailed and in-depth sense of the lived process in both painting and viewing. You can also see that the paintings are finished to varying degrees, remembering that my ethical commitment was to get enough of the content and color down to engage with and hold the psychic energy of the image. Like the active imagination, most of the images are in raw form.

**the lightning  
path splits the  
tree; the ego and  
it's intellect enter  
the body**



**the illuminated  
manuscript was  
unbound like a  
great deck**

