

# FRAGMENTATION AND COHESION

## Art and the Body Mind

PAUL KING & HELEN GARRETT

### **Paul and Helen - What inspired you to create this workshop together?**

We realised through conversation and enquiring into each other's work that, while using different mediums, our approaches and frames of reference were very similar as for ourselves and others we seek to bring together our inner and outer worlds.

There are many similarities between body movement and mark making. Organising the body to work from a place of centre before action can apply to art and movement. If I am to raise the Chinese brush and lower it onto the white page, how will I do this - with a busy mind or with a quiet mind? Where will my attention be? What may hinder or allow my flow and importantly how do my beliefs, my attitudes and even my posture affect how I move forward with something?

We are both concerned with engaging the whole person and to bring them into creative relationship with themselves and their authentic purpose and vision, with others and with the world at large.

In thinking about what we would offer in this workshop, we wanted to apply the universal principles we explore to something that related to and addressed the real-world experience today. Breaking apart and bringing together reflect a universal dynamic which we should hope would be healthy balance but clearly it is not so in the world today. Social dynamics and the many demands on us as individuals are creating the sense of being pulled apart. Sometimes this is a prelude to deep questions and the emergence of a new formulation, a new coherence.

### **What do you mean by the body's inherent wisdom and what is somatic awareness?**

The body has inherent wisdom that could be described as a deep knowing in the system of what is balanced, what feels good or right. One could say that our body innately wants to heal so even when something goes awry physically or mentally there is a remembered truth deep inside of us that can be contacted. This fundamentally is what both we work with using different mediums. We create a 'safe space' where participants are held and encouraged to notice how their bodies reveal patterns and can create new possibilities for them.

The body is our silent witness to our whole life. It holds our life's narrative, our identity.

Our somatic awareness consists of sensing how we move and shape ourselves spatially and secondly it includes our capacities to sense into our internal feelings and sensations – to know what is going on inside, to pick up signals and tap into our instinctual and intuitive responses and knowing. This intelligence works much more quickly than our cognitive mind but often gets ignored, dismissed, muted or covered over by the activities of our cognitive mind.

**Paul – I know your work is about helping people change the way they relate to themselves, each other and the world. How will you address this in your workshop?**

Fragmentation and cohesion are two sides of the same universal coin. They are a potentially dynamic partnership for creativity and growth when we can arrive at a calm, open and inquisitive centre, both physically and energetically in our sense of purpose and vision. In a challenging world we often tighten and abstract ourselves in an effort to hold ourselves and things together. It is our survival mechanism at work but there is an alternative and more resourceful response. To get in touch with our centre, our core, to open up and include the world around us and create relationship rather than separation. This is true for our inner world and our outer world. It is what we will be exploring through art and the body-mind in this workshop.

**Helen – Can you tell me about your art and your intention with this workshop?**

'Creativity has enriched my understanding of the connection between our inner and outer worlds of experience. The creative process has enabled me to observe my journey as it deepens and develops. With painting I am free to enter a world without boundaries - a world of possibilities'

Inspired by poetry, music and contemplative traditions I am interested in the essential nature of life, what lies beyond the first glance, the longing and deeper currents running through each human life.

There is something special about a visual mark that can describe an *inner* response to an *outer* experience. We see it clearly on the paper for a moment. Observing the nature of a mark can bring our attention to certain patterns we may have or ways of approaching life. Do we start our drawing with a gentle line - or with a confident or harsh line? How do we feel in our body as we begin the exercise? Where on the page do, we begin our drawing?

If we can link our drawing to our body so that it flows in an unconscious way, we find that we may have access to *information* that can show us something new about ourselves. Just like the body making a somatic response to a trigger, we can look and say. "I didn't realize but now I can see that..." The art making in this workshop is valuable in this way. We will work with the drawing tool as an extension of our body so line becomes natural and unhindered. We will all begin at the same place and there is no need for previous artistic experience.

**Do people need have some experience of tai chi?**

No experience needed. However, Katie I wonder if we can say 'tai chi inspired movement' as I am not sure I am going to teach a tai chi form rather I think I will be using elements to explore foundational principles through individual and interactive movement.

**What sort of art work will participants be doing?**

Chinese Brush and Ink, using charcoal, blending the art work with movement work to express and reveal...