

*If Realization is an accident, there are ways to make ourselves more accident prone.*

Zentatsu Richard Baker Roshi

This quote from Baker Roshi speaks of Spiritual Realization that comes upon us as grace. What is unsaid here is that how we perceive life as inseparable from the lens through which we see it. Yet, there are ways of perceiving differently. Paradigms are built on assumptions of beliefs that are not necessarily substantiated. Many of these beliefs create painful and continual struggle. However, to change a belief system is not easy. To try to shift a paradigm directly is like leveraging the earth from its orbit. There is no place to stand. Yet at the same time, cultivating this kind of accident is an interesting proposition. Perhaps becoming *grace-accident-prone* means realizing what possibilities the lens curtails. What might a practice look like that augments changes in habitual consciousness. Could there be a practice that challenges perceptions of reality? At this time in history our perception of reality already seems to be wobbling. Beliefs are often bound to language, discounting embodied experience. So can we speed up our paradigm shift by cultivating a new context created from say...the body?

In Marking into the Paradigm we use visual arts materials we explore somatically, through the imaginal field, experiences like joy. As seen in the exploratory pieces in the visual component to this podcast on YouTube the imaginal field is explored, played with, and celebrated for insights and connections that could easily be missed.

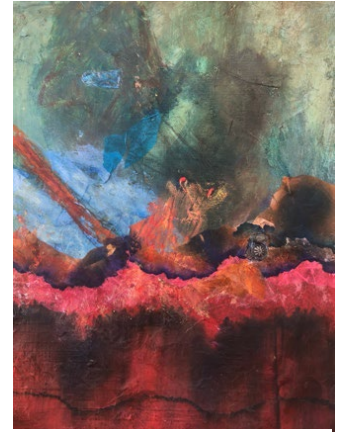
Let's move to body feelings and responses. Beginning with happiness, a constitutional right in our country even if the pursuit has manifested as collectively bound to capitalist machinery. In this context we see that happiness is temporary. We have all experienced how it comes and goes. We can pursue it, and we do, yet it can turn on a dime. Happiness arrives from outside conditions.

Now consider your own experience of joy by feeling back to a strong or recent experience. Joy feels to be a whole-body experience coming from within, It can only be experienced in the moment. There is a transformational aspect to joy. Happiness, it seems, can be projected forward and backward in time. Joy on exploration feels to be an underlying state that is always there. It does, however, require availability. Joy is about being and so is held in a greater context of meaning. Some would even say that it is our true nature and therefore cannot be pursued.

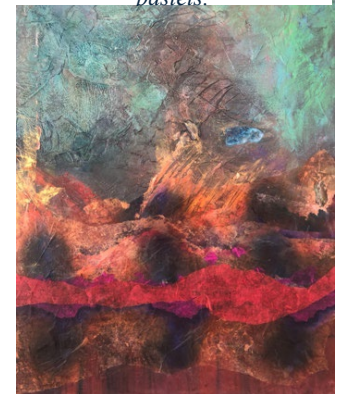


*Details Incised patterns into cold wax.*

Joy and happiness, although perceived differently, often are mixed together. Scientist have finally become interested in emotions as they now have tools to measure and track comparative data. For example, they can distinguish between what we are describing as joy or happiness and even sensations of awe in the body through responses in the brain but also sounds and facial expressions. From personal experience, to begin making linguistic distinctions is an example of refining of perception. Mark-making as a somatic practice invites this kind of exploration. The hands have often proven to be ahead of the brain and so the visual arts can give insight to the experience of joy to be more complex than happiness.



*Early stages of textured Panel with cold wax, oil stick & pastels.*



Marking is a way to bring forward through body awareness, self-imbedded mental concepts. We cannot readily see beyond our culture's time and place. In exploring joy through marking pieces, I was surprised how dark my piece began. I had associated joy with brightness and levity. Mind you, I was not trying to articulate or depict joy but rather wanting to engage it. Still there was a gap between what I recognized in my body as joy and what was appearing on the substrate. Then I had an insight. My realization was that joy is inclusive. I could feel joy in the midst of sorrow or even confusion. As I excavated the layers of joy, I noticed that it emerged in spite of the despair of planetary that I wanted to avoid. By acknowledging this grief in my marking, I became more available to the spectrum that joy includes. This may be the realm of accident-proneness of which Baker Roshi speaks. It is also the set-up of the joke in the first podcast that initiates a leap in understanding.

Our engagement in any art form, either as creators or participants is intimate to who we are. It is also bound to how we perceive and define ourselves. Consciously or unconsciously, it is part of our identity. Culturally what we do and make reflects who we are and so we are critical of what we make and how it is received. In this art-practice we shift the creative process from the polarities of good/bad, successful/unsuccessful and pleasure/pain to a practice in presence or availability. We can only be without judgement if we are not personally invested or identified with the product. Part of the art-practice is to experience it as a collaboration. We are not trying for something. It is simply the engagement of the experience. As mentioned earlier in the set-up for the joke there is a surprise punchline that forces a leap in recognition. For me it was the underlying currents of complex feelings that are included in joy.

Reflecting on joy brought me to wonder about awe. In Dacher Keltner's book, *Awe, The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life*, his definition of awe is *an overwhelming feeling of reverence, admiration and even fear produced by that which is a mystery beyond our understanding*. We cannot chase Joy, but I suspect awe can be cultivated in the sense of enlarging the container of the mystery.



*Finished Diptych with Pastels*

In Marking into the Paradigm we are using art-practice to develop our accident-proneness as we confront the subject/object dichotomy. We establish relationships with the 'other'. Using art materials in new ways to create a larger container to embrace the mystery of the universe. The studio practice is a way to embody the relatedness to the universe with broader principles than the ones we have inherited. We are creating new definitions, new chances for possibility and even provocative accidents. It is a practice of feeling, of being in the presence of something vast that transcends our understanding of the world and allows for exploration. Majio