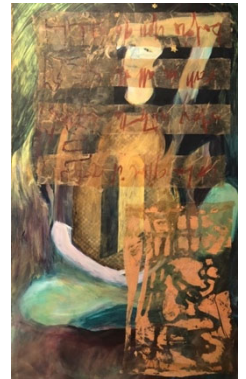


Hello, this is Majio from Anavami Studio with the blog: *Marking into the Paradigm*, an approach to creative process in visual arts that alters our perceptions of *reality*, changing our belonging. This episode -The Mouse & Cheese...explores how our impetus for engagement in the studio influences our creativity.

In Studio Anavami we are experimenting with creativity by noticing what elicits willingness to experiment and what dampens our willingness to risk. The polarity of reward/punishment it seems is not equal to the delight of a curious engagement and wonderment of the mystery.

Reworking this painting in the slide is the context to explore the difference between the journey and a product.



The asemic script over the seated figure is the visual and emotional shift from the physical world and thereby opening to another layer of reality. It does not make sense and yet it leads to other scripts which stimulates creative engagement. In this exploration there arose the desire for a new perception, breaking an old habit or spell. Through the materials a metaphor slowly begins to materialize leading to insights.

By chance a book 12th C Taoist spells came to my attention containing a magic spell to change one's vision. I created a mask and printed a monoprint with a gel plate on thin paper. With the asemic writing and magical calligraphy it begins to look like the computer code that simulates the alternative reality in *The Matrix*. The metaphor is apt in this exploration marking the territory of reality that we have been spoon fed.



Today there is more interest in research than ever before on creativity because technology can give hard data. An experiment called **The Mouse in the Maze** from *The Mindful Way* speaks to how reward and punishment craft our creativity.

Two groups of students were shown a cartoon of a mouse, trapped in a maze. Each group was shown a different version. One depicted a piece of Swiss cheese at the maze's exit, the other, an owl hovering to seize the mouse. The maze took a few minutes to solve.

Later, the students were tested to determine their current state of creativity. "Those who had helped their mouse avoid the owl turned in scores that were **fifty percent lower** than the scores of students who helped their mouse find the cheese. The state of mind elicited by attending to the owl had resulted in a lingering sense of caution, avoidance, and **vigilance for things going wrong**. This mind-state in turn weakened creativity, closed down options, and reduced the student's flexibility in responding to the next task."



Fear and avoidance, like an owl capturing a cartoon mouse, significantly diminishes creative responses. The immediacy of need stifles expansive abilities. While it is helpful to narrow decisions when necessary for survival it can seriously stunt our capabilities when it controls us in a loop of fear.

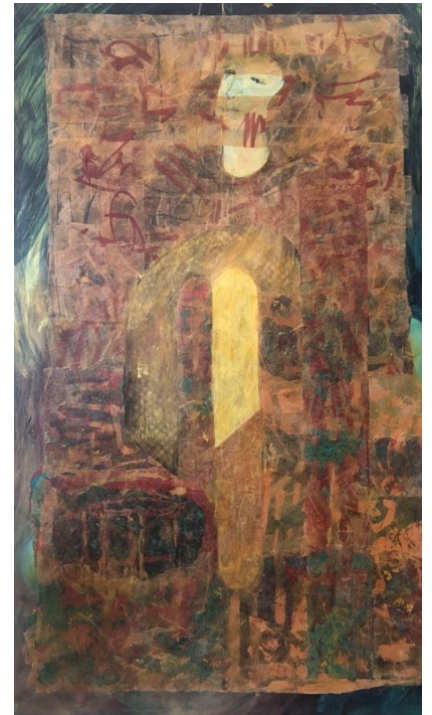
Imagining the cartoon mouse getting the cheese significantly boosts creative responses. It allows for a creation of different pathways. According to *The Mindful Way*, the experiment suggests that if we approach any task "**with qualities of interest, curiosity, warmth, and goodwill**" to counter "**effects of aversion and avoidance,**" **to choose more creative strategies.** Yet, how do we counter the effects of reward fixation, which can also lead to constriction.

If the purpose instead becomes engaging in and of the world then creativity is unleashed. We use marking as co-creation. We are in a conversation as pressure and movement leave traces with the implements in our hands--- not guiding nor controlling but responsive. Be as a child, trust your hand and your body in the play of exploration. Re-member a language that goes beyond material, across all time to when we were not the sole agents of every act but engaged in a larger relationship.

In the initial practice we are looking to meet the world deeply. Reward fades fast and as a motivator narrows the possibilities of creativity. The cheese is not the end-product because there is no end, no finished, no 'look what I did.'

There is a pause in the creative work. Sometimes it continues to the next piece or a piece three years from now. Sometimes there is a return to re-work. Just as there is no end to the constant learning and discovering in life the marking pieces are not finished products because they are alive. They will continue beyond the maker to others in participation. In the material world of objects, consider that in relationship to being may be constant transformational flow without end.

There is no Owl in the studio. There is also no cheese. We have only the engagement of possibilities and ensuing insights! This art-practice offers joy, fascination, enthrallment, delight and also frustration, perplexity, dumbfoundedness and surprise. Because reward is fleeting the nourishment comes from being alive, connected and in collaboration with the world. David Whyte speaks of 'our work as the place where the self meets the world'. This art-practice is about how we choose to meet the world... not where commodity meets the market lace, but selfhood, is about beingness in relation the world. It is a practice or worlding.



Book: Experiment, **The Mouse in the Maze** from *The Mindful Way Through Depression*, from Williams, Teasdale, Segal, and Kabat-Zinn