

Artist as Shaman in Community: Restoring Life

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Abstract: This paper demonstrates that someone grounded in western allopathic culture can use shamanic techniques to both heal her/himself and help others heal themselves in allopathic venues. The transformative power of the creative process used in purposeful art changes the practitioner as well as the viewer psychologically as well as psychophysiologicaly. Precise visualization technique expressed in concrete imagery can be seen as a healing science. This self-help can successfully be taught to people of various cultures and all ages.

Terms: Shaman, healer, allopathic, visualization, frequency, body mapping, psychophysiology, biofeedback, psychoneuroimmunology

Artist, Shaman, Scientist: **Artists** collaborate with their medium (paint, etc.) to layer veils of light and shadow to *produce* illusions of form that have dimension, reflection, refraction and the presence of substance. **Shamans** (and priests) *are* the mediums who *invoke* illusions of form that have dimension, reflection, refraction and the presence of substance. Both artists and shamans bear responsibility for the effect of their conjuring, are generally lauded as visionaries, and respected for upholding and expanding the positive values of their culture.

Artists are also **scientists**, often unwittingly, as they arrange frequencies of light (color) to create imagery, much as frequencies of light are controlled as lasers for allopathic medical purposes. Depending upon the form of the visual image, it may be salutary or detrimental to psychological and thus physical health.

The most salient difference between artist and scientist is that the artist brings abstraction into form (an idea becomes a physical image), while the scientist brings form into abstraction (a physical image is translated into an equation or another conceptual aspect).

The healing roles of shaman and shaman/artist differ. Submissive disciples abdicate and yield their own innate powers of healing and life-direction to their shaman/doctor/priest who thus rob the disciples of their self-healing will and capacity. The artist/shaman assumes his/her own power, exemplifies its use and teaches others to claim and wield their own power for life-direction as well as physical and emotional well-being.

Characteristics of a Shaman: Following the characteristics delineated by Marcel Eliade (1964), I can align much of my experience as an artist to that of a shaman in the following ways:

1. Straddles and intermediates between the spiritual and material/human worlds:

- *Imagery is conjured in call and response of open-ended discovery. Each work is unique and precipitated by physical and spiritual experience.*

2. Evokes imagery to change the consciousness of self and others:

- Aligns frequencies of light/color into specific forms to evoke change both spiritually and physiologically.

3. Heals trauma and restores balance to both the physical and spiritual aspects of the individual, resulting in positive change in the community at large:

- Healed herself from paralysis (1980) as well as near lethal damage to all parts of her body after a devastating car accident (1999).

- As a healing presence in community the artist/shaman stimulates and encourages others to engage in the process of self-healing and self-realization.

4. “Called” to this vocation:

- From earliest childhood the artist knew that alternative understandings of reality were not only possible, but necessary, saving her from the negative consequences associated with a terribly abusive childhood.

5. Spends long solitary periods in wilderness:

- From early childhood nature has been the artist’s refuge. She has spent long solitary sojourns in nature, from three to sixteen months; nature has been her teacher, her comfort.

6. Experiences serious illness that is not curable by western medicine (Turner 1996):

- Inexplicable paralysis of left side of body in 1980 that led to dire diagnosis by medical doctors.

7. Self-heals through spiritual means:

- Used visualization through art to heal body and psyche.

8. Helps heal others of both emotional and physical illnesses for the greater good:

- Worked with children and adults with cancer in both Los Angeles and Nairobi.
- Worked with women who had been raped to heal their bodies, and regain self-esteem and dignity.
- Trains others to use body-mapping visualization system to heal themselves.

9. Uses symbols of respective cultures:

- Self-evident in the artist’s work as well as work with others.

- Use of cultural images to both inform patients and transform community hospital in Watts, CA
- Use of images to change concepts of future of children and adults in both Los Angeles and Nairobi; they had been given to believe that they were dying. This belief system was transformed as they realized they had the power to heal themselves and be self-directed.

10. Identifies with certain animals:

- The artist's given and married last names, Yelin and Hirsch, mean deer in Polish and German respectively. She has from childhood identified with deer, feeling comfort alone in forests.

11. Requires paraphernalia and ritual, (sacred space):

- Needs studio, quiet, materials, and nature.

12. Enters into auto hypnotic trance

- Enters into the sacred "zone" when painting.

Introduction: Over a period of forty years, I have come to understand that my life as an artist parallels the life of a shaman in many ways. Witnessing ritual and practice in the many cultures in which I have both lived and visited has corroborated this idea. By focusing on imagery as a powerful vehicle for physical/emotional healing, I have learned to recognize the body as the repository of intuition, creativity and intrinsic knowledge leading toward physical healing and behavior benefitting the greater good.

I will begin with a brief history of the influences and experiences that led me to understand and use art as a healing process. This summary includes how my earlier role of visual

artist in the “art world” evolved to wider interdisciplinary and healing pursuits such as voluntary controls learned in the early 80’s with pioneers in the field; and how the discovery of my theory on the origin of alphabet affirmed my belief that hard-wired body systems are integrated with imagery and change the psychophysiology and behavior of the practitioner. I will include examples of the use of visualization and imagery to heal myself and teach others to heal themselves in United States and Kenya.

Early Childhood:

“I was a questioner from earliest childhood. My mother was a celebrated poet/author, suffered severe mental illness from childhood throughout her life as well as chronic physical pain caused by a car accident when she was fifty-four. As a result of my mother’s violent physical abuse, I stopped talking from eight months to four years. The family thought I was retarded. My father was a Talmudic scholar who spoke, read and wrote thirteen languages. He was seriously injured in a car accident, also at age fifty-four, and became an invalid, his brilliant mind tragically trapped in a declining body, until he died thirteen years later. I was eight at the time of his accident and often stayed home from school to take care of him. Oddly, I was also seriously injured in a near lethal car accident at age fifty-four, and healed myself through visualization and purposeful art.” (*“Demonic to Divine: the Double Life of Shulamis Yelin,” (Yelin, Hirsch, Marrelli, Vehicule Press, 2014)*)

By my early teens my life goal was to become a writer and psychologist. I had been writing and publishing essays with titles like “Enigma” about the sad state of the world from the age of six in the four languages of my childhood (English, French, Yiddish, Hebrew). I queried the fact that we were at the height of civilization and still faced the age-old problems of inadequate love, food and shelter. At eight I asked my Torah teacher that although in Hebrew the names and pronouns of God are written as both male and female, we referred to God only as

male. My orthodox teacher grabbed me by the hair, threw me out of class and I was never allowed back. At ten I wrote Albert Einstein and asked how he could reconcile being the greatest scientist in the world and, as I had read, still believed in the God of the Old Testament who caused suffering, illness and war. He answered within a week of receiving the letter. The key line was “Always form your opinions according to your own judgment. You have shown in your letter that you are able to do so.” He died several weeks later. Thirty years after that exhortation to follow my own ideas, I presented my first theory in science at Princeton and was taken to the desk in the house in which the letter had been written many years prior. The letter remains the guide of my life.

I had no training in science. However, during the depths of Montreal’s 1960 winter when I was in tenth grade, I walked many blocks in the dark in extreme cold through snow and ice to a friend’s house to watch a weekly late evening black/white CBC TV program called “Medic”. Cameras were placed in the OR above the patient and entire surgeries were televised. At sixteen in first year McGill University, I dated a medical student with whom I studied anatomy, was privy to the dissection labs and gained an understanding and awe of the complex systems and beauty of the human body.

As a student at University of California, Berkeley, during the Free Speech Movement, my education swerved wildly from received ideas in the western tradition to protests, discovery, interpretation, revision and innovation integrating philosophies of the east.

Becoming an Artist: I became an artist by accident in my twenties. Rather than accepting the invitation from Stanford into a Clinical PhD Psychology track, I followed my then husband to UCLA and went into an MFA program where I began to paint seriously. My interest in the

psyche never waned but was broadened into imagery.

By my second year I was exhibiting at the Los Angeles County Museum and after my first exhibition in New York in 1972, my work was widely exhibited, including museums such as the New York Whitney. That year I was influenced by a trip to Toledo, Spain where I saw Hebrew letters artfully inscribed into the 14th C stone architecture. I recognized that the words were not only meaningful but their forms alone captured my attention. Something about the structure of the letters, already so familiar to me, catapulted me into a new direction. I began to work with Hebrew letters in my art, and painted layers of unfolding imagery as a metaphor for unraveling my psyche.

As an artist I knew the effect of image making on the artist, and image-viewing on the viewer – direct changes in psychophysiology. In the West the only area where this phenomenon is widely acknowledged is pejoratively known as pornography. Everyone knows that a person, particularly apparent in a man, will have psychophysiological affect when seeing an erotic image. What is not understood is that *everything one sees (and hears etc) changes human psychophysiology.*

First Experience with Art and Healing: In 1980 I was afflicted with paralysis on my left side and was diagnosed with possible Multiple Sclerosis. I had two canvases made in my own image, five and half feet tall and two feet wide. I stood against each of the canvases facing forward and had someone trace my body contour. In the first canvas I worked through the tangled tissues as I perceived them by imagining that I could see internally. The image became more coherent and I continued the painting until there were twelve “seeds” of renewal at the top of the image. In the second canvas I painted a full-length self-portrait, and over it an image of

resurgence of the spirit. I was absolutely resolute that I could affect my own healing and by the end of the year I was healed. I cannot be certain whether the symptoms would have disappeared spontaneously, but based on what I was to learn subsequently, I would attest that the intentionality, specificity of the focused work, responsibility and power that I took for myself to use imagery to work through illness was successfully used to return to health and well being.

Solitary Sojourns in Nature; Cosmography: In the late 70's I began to take several day solitary car trips into deep nature. The first of these trips to a remote and isolated forest in the high Sierra Mountains in California, resulted in my almost freezing to death, buried under a snow bank. Most improbably and miraculously, because of a series of seemingly unrelated and strange coincidences that finally ended in the incessant yapping of a dog urinating on that particular snow bank, I was found barely conscious and brought back to life.

By the early 80's these short trips had turned into long solitary sojourns in wilderness, from six weeks in 1981 in southern California to as long as a year and half (1988-90) in Tonto National Forest in north eastern Arizona. I lived with forest animals, bear, elk, deer, coyotes, wolves, bobcats who walked with me. I learned to survive alone in extreme cold sans heat, power or water.

"I grew more and more entranced by nature. I lost all sense of identity as it had been formed by attachments and position in the city. I was exiled from the human embrace and comforted by the universal embrace.

There was no difference between interior and exterior – everything was fluid. I had become tabula rasa; I was ecstatic. In January of 1990, the frozen pipes burst through the decaying wood floorboards of the cabin and one of the pipes leaked a steady stream of propane gas. It was too cold to cut the plastic open for ventilation. I was prepared to die. I lay on the bed, as always fully dressed, and dreamed: I saw my soul floating above me and the person who had saved me from the freezing death in 1974 stood by the bed and

said, “You will get through this one in the snow too, Gilah”. I awoke, and from that moment on, the burdens and difficulties of simply staying alive were transformed into the gifts of capacitating ongoing life. My will to live was far stronger than my will to die.” (A more detailed account can be found in “*Artist as Shaman*”, Gilah Yelin Hirsch 2014)

One of the many significant outcomes of these hermitages became the foundation of my work as a scientist. By 1982 I had developed the germ of a hypothesis on the origin of alphabet based on observation of patterns in nature. I called this idea *Cosmography: the Writing of the Universe*. Over years of solo wilderness experience I photographed, identified and documented five forms in nature that caught my attention – angle, straight line, arc, meander and X. As they resembled letter forms in various alphabets that I could read, I began to call the shapes alphabetic morphology. In subsequent world travels to photograph these forms in native landscapes, I found these forms to be intrinsic to all alphabets ancient to modern. I also noted that art and architecture considered beautiful by all cultures in all eras share in these five forms. I conjectured that I recognized these forms because they reflected some aspect of the perceptual process, natural physiological beauty at the most innate level of being. If we label as “beauty” the reflecting process that simultaneously induces harmonious states of wholeness, healing and health, we can then deduce that non-harmonious reflections, or the removal from or distortion of these positively reflecting elements, will cause negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, rage and grief. Studies in psychoneuroimmunology, a medical term for mind and body healing, indicate that there is a significant relationship between healing and beauty on one hand and illness and chaos on the other.

Council Grove Conference: 1969 Elmer and Alyce Green, visionary scientists of the Menninger Clinic’s Voluntary Controls Department (Topeka, KS) founded the still ongoing,

invitation-only conference in a remote location in Kansas, to study consciousness and mind/body control. Biofeedback, eventually used in everyday medicine, was among the many medical and psychiatric innovations developed in this context. I was first invited to present my art and philosophy at the Council Grove (KS) conference in 1982. In that first slide presentation I included my conviction that art can heal body and mind.

Form evokes feeling

Feeling conjures metaphor

Metaphor demands expression

I presented my rudimentary findings showing how I had begun to “read” the landscape in wilderness as certain forms “leapt out at me” in various world alphabets. I continued to investigate the relationship of perception and cognition and was invited back in 1983 to present the by-then comprehensive theory. I theorized that the five forms I had recognized pervasively were chosen universally by our ancestors as they walked about their terrain, because they mirrored the shapes of neurons and neural processes of perception and cognition; and that there is a direct and oscillating relationship between perception and cognition: in other words, *do we think because of what we see, or do we see because what we think with?*

One hundred international scientists enthusiastically hailed my hypothesis as a viable theory. It was original, replicable and elegant.

I have been invited back every year since then to present my continuing work and to participate in the shared wealth of innovative ideas and experiential information. I have been privy to exercises such as hypnotic suggestion, bending spoons on command, walking on fire, using biofeedback to alter blood pressure, watching yogis cut themselves and not bleed, individuals freezing their hands but not damaging tissue, controlling growth over plants and

patterns in water, telepathy, telekinesis, remote viewing and a host of other activities that were once both secret and ground breaking.

These techniques were ultimately aimed at enlarging the curative capacities of the medical profession. O. Carl Simonton MD's guided imagery work in treating cancer was often cited at the Council Grove conference during those years. Early in his medical career (70's), Simonton noticed that certain patients given the same dose of radiation for similar cancers as others had different outcomes. His research concluded that people who had a more positive attitude generally lived longer and had fewer side effects. Furthermore, Simonton and his wife Stephanie pioneered in using specific guided visualization, instructing their patients to use PAC-MAN imagery, an early video game, to eat and vanquish the cancer cells. It was soon evident that the more anatomically/clinically accurate the visualization, the more powerful it proved for the patient in self-healing.

As more affirming data is published, positive and precise visualization has been adopted into other arenas. Athletes are instructed to visualize the optimal performance, "see" themselves achieving the highest quality. Pre-surgical patients are guided by specialized coaches through precise visualizations describing what is to be done and how the healing will take place. Data supports higher quality and rate of healing with this kind of guided imagery. On a more mundane level, simply visualizing oneself on a treadmill will trigger loss of calories.

Multi-Culti: Although I began solo international travel at fourteen, it was not until a year's continuous trip alone in fifteen Asian countries (1986/87) that I began to immerse myself into diverse cultures, often very difficult to reach. These challenging travels yielded mind-expanding information. Most truths change from culture to culture, and seem to be random, contextual and

convenient. For example, *joy* is culturally determined eg one culture values one or many husbands, another one or many wives, one values sons, another values daughters, one is heterosexual, another homosexual, the gods change every few miles, etc. Healing modalities that *always* work in one culture, will *never* work in another. However, the single human characteristic that is ubiquitous is *grief*, which is universally experienced in the same way – loss of contact, rejection and abandonment. Connection, reflection is necessary to life.

Cell Whispering: As I was convinced that our behavioral make-up echoes our physiology, I found the hard-wired corollary to the universality of experiencing grief, in the fact that cells must “whisper” together (Ross, Adey W. 1987). Calcium must be present to facilitate cell “whispering” (Loewenstein, Werner R. 1999) If cells cannot communicate, they clone themselves, becoming cancer. Similarly, personalities who do not communicate invent multiple personalities, a psychological psychopathology/cancer. Communities, nations who do not communicate, remain isolated and insular and eventually die. Even galaxies connect through gravity over eons. If they do not, they implode.

Bodhicitta and Calcium: In 1990 I was invited to attend Tantric teachings first ever given by any Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India. Over a period of six weeks, the Dalai Lama instructed the visualization practice of Bodhicitta (compassion). We were guided into “seeing” a white sphere above the head (crown chakra) and, accompanied by *mudras* (gestures) and *mantras* (sounds), “moved” the sphere down one side of our bodies and up the other, thereby nourishing all cells, systems and organs with compassion. The final task was to expel the sphere of Bodhicitta out of the crown chakra so that it could nourish all sentient beings. All who experienced this

mind/body/heart teaching felt better emotionally and physically.

As with the well-known affect of erotic imagery and impact of powerful art of all kinds, that experience led me to consider that a biochemical change occurred during the visualization. I conjectured that when the bodhicitta practice was developed, there was some knowledge of the importance of calcium, the primary mineral for all primates, and that the visualization practice subliminally included calcium with compassion. I had been to Tibet several times, knew that the Himalayas (the youngest mountains in the world, known as the “baby mountains”) were most recently under the sea and the sparse vegetation was rich in calcium having evolved from fossilized crustacean material over eons. Tibetans eat only an extremely high protein carnivorous diet - yak (meat, cheese, butter, oil) and are very healthy. Protein is needed to carry calcium. Tibetans practice bodhicitta visualization on a daily basis thus visually amplifying the circulation of calcium in their bodies. I sent my theory to Dharamsala where it was reviewed by the late Geshe Tsultrim Gyeltsin who was the authority on origin of meditation practices. Startled by my assumption, he nevertheless confirmed that indeed there was a connection. Bodhicitta, he wrote, is of two sorts, one “relative”, referring to compassion and the other “absolute”, referring to the mineral calcium. These are distinguished in Tibetan writing by using a lower case b (calcium) or upper case (compassion) B. Thus, in visualizing compassion, one is also visualizing calcium, both together a powerful duet in maintaining physical and emotional health.

Car Accident: Art and Healing: In 1999 I was in a devastating, near lethal car accident on a remote road in Queen Charlotte Island, now called Haida Gwaii, Canada. As soon as I returned to consciousness I began to visualize blue ice to decrease swelling throughout my terribly damaged body. It was later determined that I had broken all my ribs, three vertebrae, sternum,

scapula on both sides, crushed heart, crushed head, crushed knees, and five millimeters of bone fragments in my spinal column. I had a flat line for an EKG. I was given dire diagnoses - paralysis from the waist down, loss of mental faculties, etc. I had no surgery. I was unable to move but rested prone at home wearing a strong Velcro body cast. With the aid of medical anatomy books, I spent my days actively visualizing the restoration of every cell and system of my body to perfect health. In two months I was able to walk upstairs to my studio and began painting seven-foot diamond shaped paintings to visually reconstruct my body from the inside out. In seven months I was reporting on my own healing at the Council Grove Conference. Despite the fact that I still have a moribund looking EKG, on which the word “normal” is written, I am unusually healthy with no physical repercussions from the accident.

Art and Visualization for Healing Purposes in Community:

- 1. Sunshine Kids Foundation, Los Angeles, CA:** In 2005 I was invited to meet “The Sunshine Kids”. Because they are “terminal” cancer patients, the children are given perks such as being picked up in limousines from their homes in very depressed areas such as Watts, California, trips to Disneyland as well as Washington, DC to meet the President, and visits with renown people. When I was invited to meet the kids as an artist, I suggested that I would work with them rather than just sign autographs. A conference room was arranged in the Marriott Hotel in Los Angeles. At my direction, a full scale medical skeleton was brought in, medical texts were purchased for every participant who ranged in age from four to eighteen, a six by two foot piece of paper was attached vertically to the wall for every person, and all sorts of art materials were made available. Participants had a parent, therapist or doctor with them.

I began by telling the story of my car accident and describing the damage to my body using the skeleton and medical books. I then showed images of the paintings I had made to heal myself. The kids were spellbound. I suggested to them that they had the power to heal themselves and that they could be president, hockey player, doctor, artist or whoever they wished.

I had learned that children are told the name of their cancer but not where it is or what it looks like. I, therefore, first had every child stand behind the skeleton, told them that they too, had such a marvelous armature, and had them manipulate the bones with their arms and legs. They began to identify with the interior of their bodies. When everyone was seated in a circle with their medical texts we went round to each child who told the name of their cancer which we all located in the texts. Everyone pointed to where in their bodies their illness was said to be. A great range of cancers was cited, from bone to brain to blood and various specific organs. Then every participant's helper traced the outer contour of each child facing forward on their tall paper. The participants were instructed to visually re construct their bodies with healthy organs using the medical texts to guide them. They could use any and all art materials they wished.

The kids went at this with great gusto. Rather than a two-hour workshop, it was extended to six and all participants created full-sized detailed images of their new selves. Besides working on the interior of their newly visualized healthy bodies, they added embellishments of all sorts like wings and auras as well as words around their new bodies. Their helpers were astonished not only with their enthusiasm but with the beauty and content of the art.

Rather than simply meeting the artist, the participants had become artists actively engaged in their own healing. Rather than looking toward death, they now saw a future and had aspirations of pursuing their dreams.

In the days and weeks that followed I received calls from doctors and therapists, describing how the kids had been transformed: vitality had been stimulated, some had gone into remission, others had their drugs reduced. Having been activated into their own healing process, they now had mission and purpose.

The art was shown in a Hollywood gallery with a celebratory opening for friends and family. The art was then picked up by a Beverly Hills gallery who framed, showed and sold the work to benefit the foundation. Hopelessness had been transformed into action, art and life.





2. Aga Khan Hospital, Nairobi, Kenya: In 2014 I was invited to be the “Artist of the Year” for the March Forth for Kids Foundation in Nairobi. In addition to meeting with many artist organizations, groups and individuals, I was invited to work with pediatric cancer patients at the prominent Aga Khan Hospital. The workshop, scheduled for eight hours, was held in a large hospital meeting room. About forty patients and their parents participated, some having walked many hours to the much anticipated event.

Despite the change in venue, the protocol was the same as in Los Angeles. Although a medical skeleton was not available, I had brought two copies of *The Amazing Pull-Out Pop-Up Body in a Book*, (David Hawcock), a handy substitute that “pops out” to a multi-layered, five feet tall, highly detailed, colorful, flexible cardboard skeleton. Although medical textbooks were not available for every participant, the hospital was able to provide enough to share.

This time the age range was from two – thirty-nine years old. Each participant had either parental or hospital staff helpers. Additional medical staff came to observe the well-advertised

workshop, and eventually decided to participate and had themselves penciled in to work on their own bodies.

I began by relating my story of recovering from the devastating car accident, showed the participants my injuries on the pop-up skeleton and in the texts and demonstrated that I had no residual effects of the trauma. I then showed the paintings I had created to reconstruct my body from the inside out. I suggested that they were very powerful and could affect their own healing in the same way. As with the kids in the west, the kids in Kenya were only told the name of their cancer but had no knowledge of their bodies. Instead of manipulating a full skeleton, participants examined the “pop-up” and identified where in their bodies their cancer resided. As in Los Angeles, we sat in a circle and each participant told the name of their cancer and we all found it in the texts and made sure everyone saw where in the body it was and what the healthy system or organ looked like.

The kids were given the same instructions and scrambled to task with the same enthusiasm and engagement. There were many teenagers involved and they were particularly excited about a new life ahead of them. Their embellishments were rich with words and slogans and stickers. I began to see collaboration everywhere between older/taller participants carrying younger/smaller kids. People moved easily from one to another, encouraging each other and ascertaining that the new healthy organs were very clear in the developing artworks.

Despite the tremendous variation in background and culture, there was no difference in the great involvement, pride and engagement of the kids in Nairobi from the kids in Los Angeles. The kids were hailed as artists and the art was hung in the halls of the pediatric oncology ward garnering great admiration. Almost two years later, I continue to receive emails from the now forty-one year old chemist with a rare form of leukemia, who attests that the activity changed his

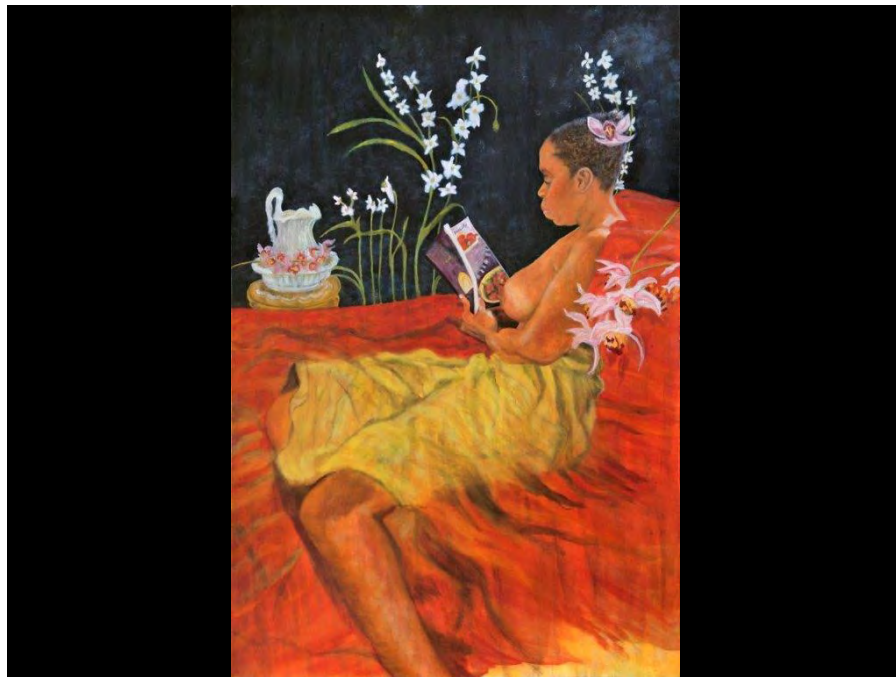
diagnosis from imminent death to continuing improvement, and his drugs are mitigated. Hospital staff continues to conduct the “body mapping” workshop with cancer patients, always with great salutary success.





3. Healing Rape Victims, Carson/Compton, Los Angeles, CA 2009: I was approached to work with women victims of rape who were being counseled for sexual abuse in the *Stepping into the Light* program. I invited the women to come to my university painting studio, and paired them with advanced student artists, both men and women. I suggested that the artists and women interview each other for four full sessions before any artwork would begin. The artists learned a great deal about the lives and traumas of the women and the women equally learned about the lives and tribulations of the artists, gaining empathy and compassion for each other. As they collaborated during the painting sessions, the artists gained respect for their models and the models regained dignity and self-esteem that had been lost to tragic abuse. The moving portraits reflected depth of empathy and emotional profundity that neither the women nor the artists had anticipated.

The paintings were exhibited and later shipped to China where the word rape was prohibited in public. Underground workshops were begun emulating the protocol and achieving similar healing of both women and artists.



4. Using Art/Imagery to Transform the Watts Health Center: Watts, Los Angeles, CA 2008

and 2009: In 2007, I queried a group of doctors at a party in Beverly Hills to name the worst hospital in Los Angeles. The consensus was Watts Health Center, once a thriving community hospital that had deteriorated into a neglected crime-ridden facility eschewed by both patients and doctors. Although the Center's administrators were skeptical, I received permission to bring my painting students for the purpose of creating murals to reawaken the facility to its curative purpose within the depressed community.

We decided to focus first on the dismal OB/GYN. We would create the murals on panels in the university painting studio and then transfer them to the hospital. We measured the walls and other appurtenances of the room. I arranged for all the materials to be donated from retail manufacturers who also delivered them to the studio. The mural depicted a larger than life calming bridge over a lily pond replete with swans. The art not only entertained and beautified but also educated, illustrating the nine stages of fetal development, showing African American women as scientists and women in high office (Michele Obama), African American fathers and grandmothers with babies, as well as single parent families. The reception desk was illusionistically painted to "dissolve" into the pond. The miserable room had been transformed into a spectacular environment, promoting good health, peace and learning. Patients and doctors filled the department.



Within a few days, I received requests from Pediatrics and then from Radiology. Everyone wanted their departments transformed as they witnessed the steady stream of patients coming to OB/GYN and returning for their scheduled appointments throughout their pregnancies, something unheard of before.

The panels and materials were again donated and work continued in the university art studio. Dingy pediatrics was enlivened by a large mural pictorially bringing the beach to Watts. Most who grow up in Watts never get to the beach forty miles away. Myriad forms of fun and sports detailed the magical mural that also depicts the Watts Towers. Kids were mesmerized by it, and chose to return for appointments to see and play close to the mural.



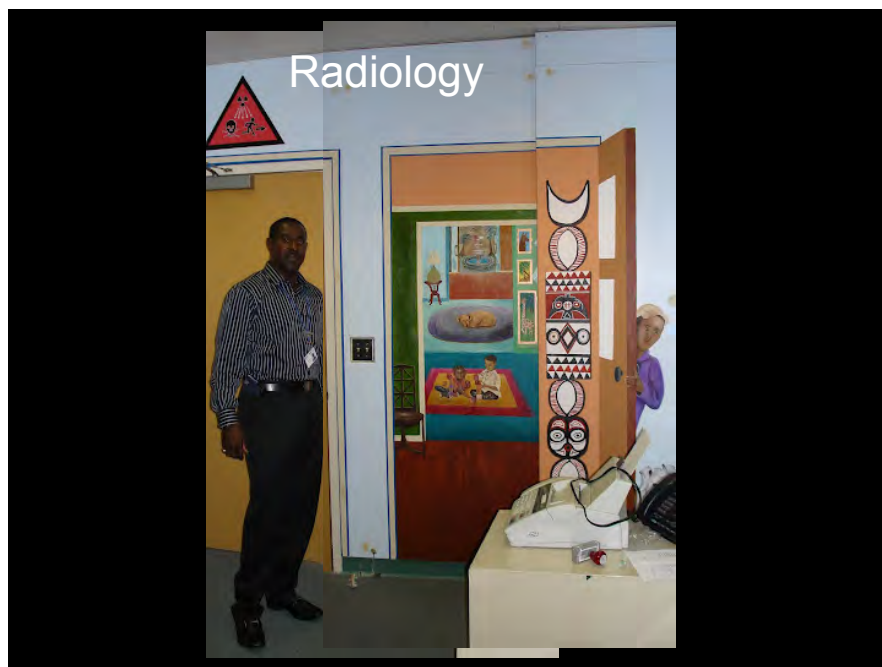
Brought the beach to Watts;
kids and their parents love this; come to play

Claustrophobic radiology was next and had to have its small waiting room walls “opened”. Panels were again donated and painted in the studio. Murals were installed of science, sports, tropical forest with animals, and a *trompe l’oeil* mural appearing to open into many rooms and gardens extending far into the distance. Patients streamed to radiology and returned as needed, loving the new environment, and proceeding with the intention to be healed.

President Obama named the Watts Health Center Murals as one of the sixteen most significant community projects in the US in 2008/9.

Conclusion:

Divinity is in humanity; spirituality is in behavior. Once awakened to their own gifts, artist/shamans should be charged to demystify “magic” and help others reclaim their innate power for healing and peacemaking. It is in the ripple effect that goodness will prevail.



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