

## **“Shifting the fear level”**

### **Interview with Jill Trappler, Cape Town**

I) *What comes to mind when you hear the expression “crossing the threshold”?*

One thing which comes immediately in mind, is a painting that I did in 1991 and it is called “Stoep”<sup>1</sup>. It is a color-field-painting. In many homes there is a Stoep that goes around a house. It is usually covered and quite wide. It is also called a veranda. The chairs are comfortable and allow for relaxation and conversation. Or there are benches especially placed for conversation. It is a place to breathe. From the interior of the house we walk through a door and across the stoep to the garden or the yard. We can look into the house and we can look out from the house, across the stoep, a threshold. We have to cross this stoep, visually and physically and we have to breathe. (essential to life) On most days in these homes a domestic worker would go down on her/his knees and after sweeping and washing, the smooth surface would be polished to shine. The yard outside the home is also swept until it looks polished. That surface holds memories of conversations embedded into these thresholds; worker’s, visitors and residents cross over one another’s narratives daily. The area protects the home from all weather, it absorbs the storms and sun shine. The big painting of mine is about that transitional space, crossing that space and being in the space. This stoep is metaphorically a threshold that I cross most days. As I wake from sleep or drift into sleep, for example. I stop to breathe as I cross these thresholds.

II) *What do you think about the phenomenon of fear?*

It is a tricky one and very real, mercurial, I live with it. We live in a very traumatized and very unequal society which causes people to fear, to live in fear, to respond or react to and with fear. It comes from injustice, lived, remembered or inherited. It is in the media. Advertising, images, movies, TV use this “phenomenon”.

I try to work with this and am motivated by engaging with it. Fear has an energy that can be transformed. It does not need to inhibit or cripple us. It does not need to take away access to our imagination. Fear is part of the real and the imagined.

III) *Do you think there is a correlation between fear and not feeling connected to the world?*

Fear does and can disconnect. I can at times feel so much fear that I am fearful of being afraid. It is isolating. My body is closer to fear than my mind. I become more scared of the smell of fear than the actual cause.

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<sup>1</sup> Africaans für “Schwelle“

You can end up in a panic and you do not know what you are actually scared of, (the snake, or me, or...) Ok, I say, lower the frequency or you will be terrified and then paralyzed. It is a transforming, shifting vibration that I can grasp and begin to work with. Ironically working with fear can be inclusive and it can make us feel safe. I can do this as a teacher. I am involved in shifting the fear of looking and drawing into an explorative experience.

IV) *Is there any experience in your life, which opens you to your art practice?*

Weaving the unwoven. Doing and undoing which involves movement of body and mind. I guess that is all experiences.

V) *Do you know the feeling of something like a rift within ourselves, or us and the world, and is your art have a special way to deal with this ...*

I need to integrate the wound into the sense of life. It is such a privilege to be alive.

VII) *What do you think about the so-called "Virtual Reality" and people playing Computer Games?*

I think we have to ask them to draw again or dig in the garden. There is a need to work one way and then the other way; the physical then the virtual and visa versa.

IX) *How can we strengthen the human quality of being connected through art?*

The creative process, working or witnessing, simply just does strengthen the "humanness" in us. It activates the soul and imagination, we participate in these processes, being human because intuitively and innately we know how to. How? Why? One of the answers must be to be in our ability to touch, physically and emotionally. Listening to music, the music inside us and all around us, helps a lot. I worked once with 75-year-old women who lived gripped by fear; a vice of fear. I asked her, what she would really like to do? "I want to collect all the stones in the garden." She said. It took her two weeks. She painted them all black, slowly and piled them up into a pyramid of stones. Then she smiled. "This makes me happy because it reminds me of when I was six years old and I had a swing on an apple tree in my parents garden."