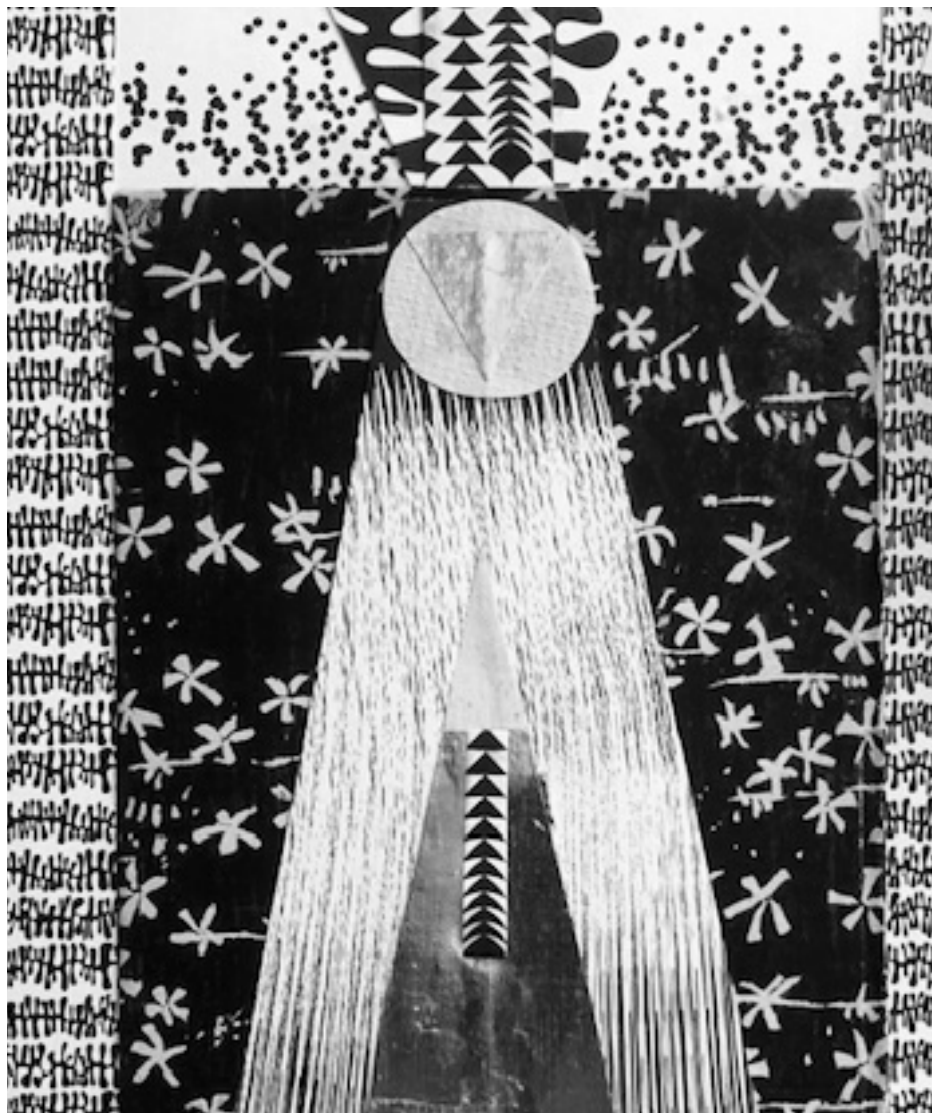


Zine **Verschenken**

#21 | april 2024 | therapy



Editorial

Welcome to our latest edition, where we explore the diverse world of therapy. In today's society, mental health awareness is increasingly important, and the concept of therapy goes beyond its traditional boundaries. It includes a range of approaches aimed at healing, personal growth, and self-discovery.

Therapy is not only about addressing mental illness; it's also about nurturing our emotional well-being, exploring our innermost thoughts, and developing resilience in the face of life's challenges. From cognitive behavioral therapy to art therapy, from mindfulness practices to somatic experiencing, there are many paths to healing, each offering unique benefits and insights.

Whether you're considering therapy for the first time, going through your own healing process, or simply curious about the field, we invite you to join us on this exploration. Let's celebrate the courage it takes to seek support, the resilience it takes to confront our inner demons, and the profound transformations that can arise from the therapeutic journey.

In the chair

In our fast-paced world, characterised by social and psychic stress, mixed messages, visual and information overload, to be clear-sighted is a rare thing indeed. Rather than use the witchy term ‘clairvoyant’, I prefer to use words like ‘empathic’, ‘sensitive’, ‘perceptive’ and ‘wise’ to describe the essence of a good therapist. To benefit from their help and advice is, of course, challenging as well as salutary, and we all have to make our own judgement. Therapists can’t and don’t have the answer to everything. Having been in therapy myself, I can say there is comfort in knowing that the person opposite you has more than likely ‘been there’ themselves. But this doesn’t excuse you from engaging in your own emotional homework. In this phase of heightened self-awareness, we often come to our own realisations, see the answers within ourselves.

To be a clear-sighted and grounded therapist you need to be a strong person with a supple psyche, to have known the full range of human emotions and set backs, to have worked out and still be working things out for yourself.

Such was the innate perception, psychic strength and magnetism of purpose of one of my therapists, I would feel her presence even as I journeyed to my appointment. As soon as I got off the bus and walked down the street to our first meeting, I felt as if I was walking on hallowed ground. Indeed, when I arrived, I was told over the intercom that I was 5 minutes early and to come back later. When I did, the door was ajar and I had the odd feeling of negotiating my own way up the stairs, along the corridor and through various empty rooms until I arrived at what I assumed my place was. There I sat wondering what it was all about, panicking over what I was going to say, until my mind stilled. Then she walked into the room.

In many ways, our sessions were other-worldly, spiritual experiences. As I responded to her question, why was I there, I felt her voice coming from behind me - with a compelling energy that was bigger than her. Far from non-directional, the therapeutic process steered me firmly but kindly along a challenging path of not-so-random experiences, repetitive patterns, buried feelings. I learned we cannot always understand the reason why - there is no point in endless speculation, after all - but that there needs to be some kind of acknowledgement and acceptance of things before we can properly move on. Therapy is a work in progress and often requires you to revisit old ground. But neither should it be a trap, an over-indulgence, a narcissistic pursuit. It is far too soul-searching for that.

On my way back from these sessions, I would retrace my steps to the bus stop, numbed of all feeling, my mind suddenly emptied of all thought. I would live out the consequences of these meetings quite unconsciously in the week that followed, until I was called upon to divulge my thoughts and evaluations in the following session. When the time came, I would often have forgotten any significant links or connections. None was more profound than the instance where I had had to take 5 days off work because

of a migraine so debilitating that I couldn’t even rest my head on a pillow! On the sixth day (somewhat prophetically), I woke up to find that a 7-year, post-bereavement affliction had vanished into thin air. A miracle, I thought! Yet, despite the auspiciousness of the event, by the time I found myself back ‘in the chair’ again, I had pushed it all to the back of my mind... Freud would have described it as a hysterical reaction. My GP applauded mildly and promptly referred me to a gynaecologist who, in turn, referred me on to a psychiatrist. A priest pronounced it a Mary Magdalene moment. Biblical! My therapist, trained in Jungian analysis, felt it was a physical manifestation of a psychological event and, as such, a turning point along the road to healing.

From that moment on, our therapy sessions were heading towards a ‘natural pause for reflection’ if not their conclusion. It was impressed upon me that I was ready to move on - often the hardest point of the whole process - and that time was the key. It was then that my therapist brought me back to my own reality: the fact I was mother to a young child, that I had more work to do and a life to live. Simple, salutary advice...

Some people go in and out of therapy sessions seemingly untouched. For me, they have been transformative experiences. Conscientious therapists don’t live in cloud cuckoo land, and neither should we.



The Unknowns of the Subconscious Mind

It has been revealed that 95% of the human brain is in its subconscious state. This fact has fascinated professionals from many medical fields as well as spiritual gurus. The depths of the unknown subconscious is a subject that has and will continue to be studied and theorised.

History from around the world shows various forms of experimentation on both the physical brain and its psychological state. One example of this is a method called Mesmerism.

Mesmerism was developed in the late 18th Century by Dr. Franz Mesmer. He believed that the moon's gravitational pull manipulated body fluids in a similar way to how the ocean's tides changed with the moon's cycle. With this observation, Mesmer began experimenting with magnets, which he believed could control the gravitational effect on the moon and what he called the 'universal fluid' within any living being.

His initial work in Vienna was not favoured, but when he moved to Paris, a city intrigued by the latest scientific developments, he soon became very popular. Using magnets to control the 'magnetic fluids', Mesmer claimed to send jolts through walls or people's bodies. As more people began to feel the effects, some began to come to him with their troubles, seeking to be healed.

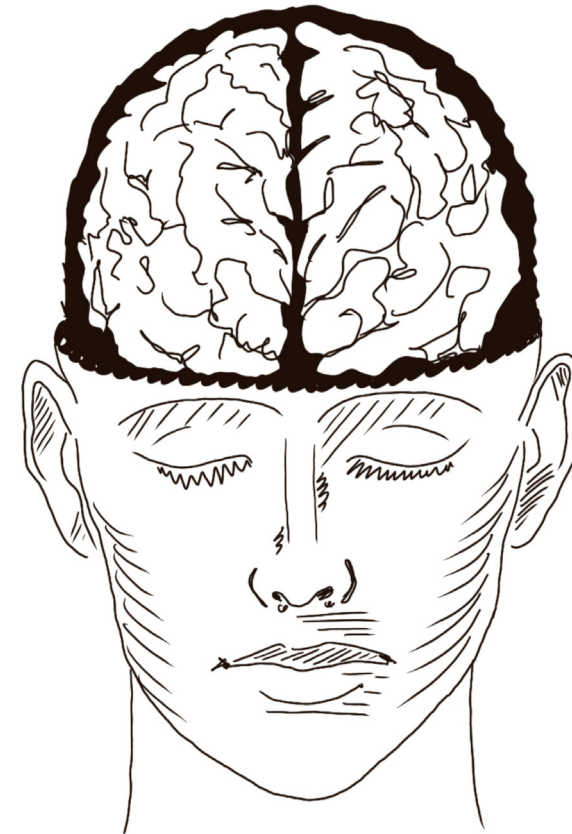
As his popularity grew, so did the variety of ailments Mesmerism could cure. Many followed in his footsteps and began using the 'Animal Magnetism' technique to treat their own patients. This raised suspicions from King Louis XVI, who organised the Royal Commission, consisting of members of the Royal Academy of Sciences and the Faculty of Medicine, to either prove or falsify the treatment.

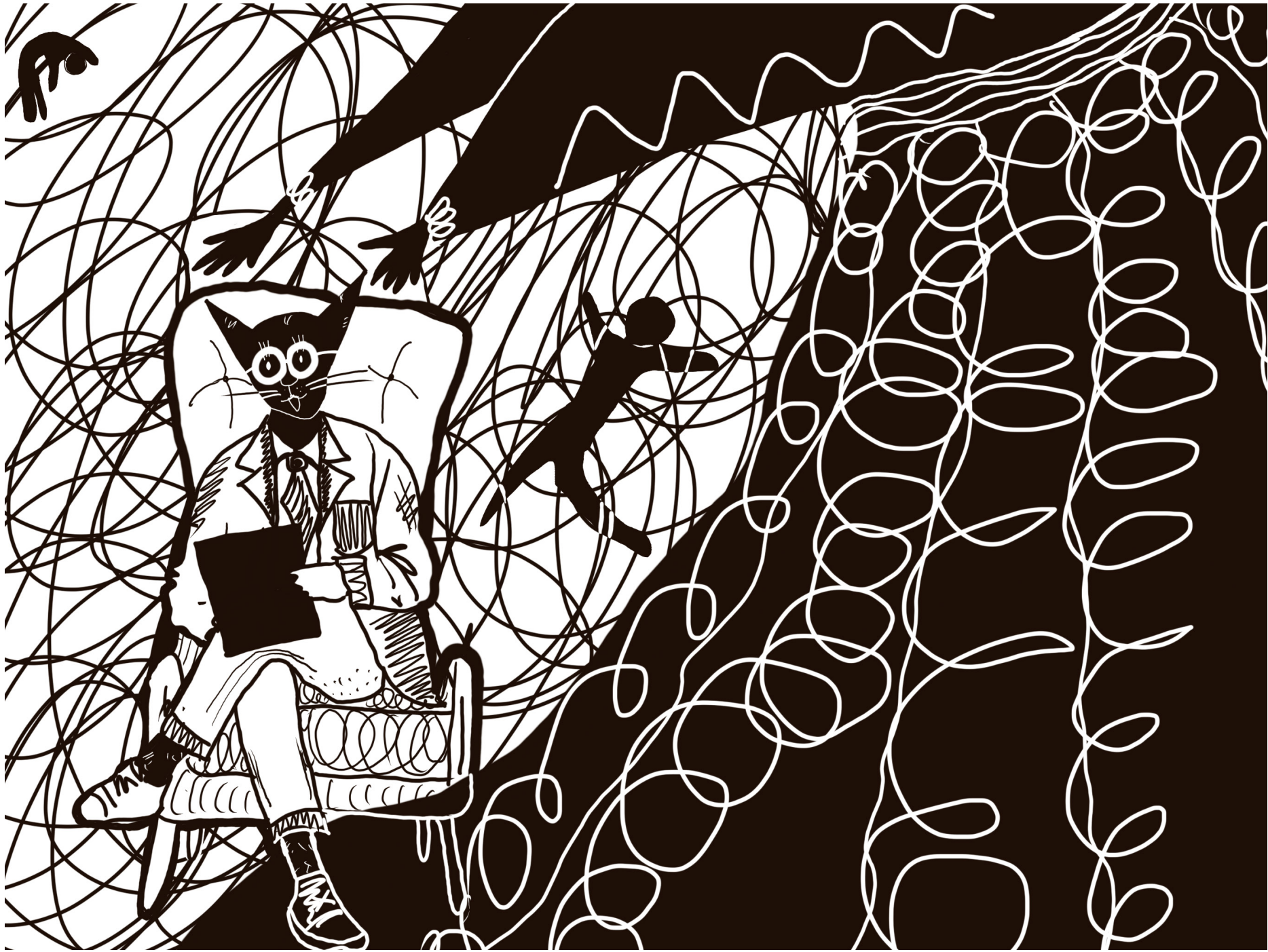
Through a series of tests, the Commission found that the method was effective due to the patient's expectations and imagination rather than the magnets themselves, and this promptly ended Mesmer's career. Although these experiments taught that the power of the mind had an effect on these treatments, they did not prove that the method was reliable.

Mesmerism had a revival in the 19th century when it was used as a surgical anaesthetic. There have been medical records of surgeries performed on patients while in a deepened mesmeric sleep. This was an alternative option, as the previous technique was to perform the surgery as quickly as possible with no anaesthesia at all. However, soon enough, it was seen that what seemed to work for some did not work for others. With the arrival of inhalation anaesthesia in 1846, this became more widely used, and mesmerism became known as a fad in the medical journals of history.

The idea that Mesmer initiated led to the idea that the subconscious mind is able to compartmentalise pain. In modern therapy, it has developed into treatments such as hypnotherapy and meditation therapy. These can be used in a variety of ways for a variety of patients.

In our current year, the subconscious mind still remains a mysterious part of the human brain and one that we do not give enough credit to. The world is so full of constant stimulation that oftentimes it is difficult for a modern society to understand the importance of switching off. So, consciously give 5 more minutes a day to switch off. Your subconscious will thank you.

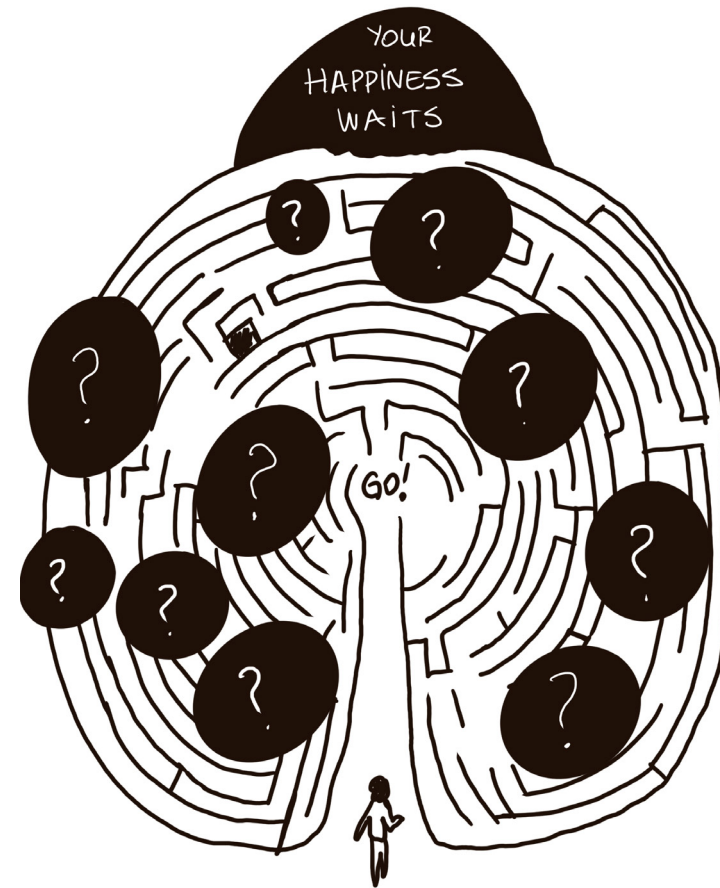




In pursuit of happiness

“Happiness is not just a place, but also a process. Happiness is an ongoing process of fresh challenges, and it takes the right attitudes and activities to continue to be happy.” – Ed Diener... “If you want to be happy, stay in part a child, with the creativity and invention that characterizes children before they are deformed by adult society.” – Jean Piaget... “A calm and modest life brings more happiness than the pursuit of success combined with constant restlessness.” – Albert Einstein... “Once you start making the effort to ‘wake yourself up’—that is, be more mindful in your activities—you suddenly start appreciating life a lot more.” – Robert Biswas-Diener... “The highest and most beautiful things in life are not to be heard about, nor read about, nor seen but are to be lived.” – Soren Kierkegaard... “Every person on this earth is full of great possibilities that can be realised through imagination, effort, and perseverance.” – Scott Barry Kaufmann... “Happiness is not out there for us to find. The reason that it’s not out there is that it’s inside us.” – Sonja Lyubomirsky... “We are so made that we can derive intense enjoyment only from a contrast and very little from a state of things. Thus our possibilities of happiness are already restricted by our constitution.” – Sigmund Freud... “Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word happy would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness.” – Carl Jung... “Happiness is achieved by the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain.” – Sigmund Freud... “It’s more selfless to act happy. It takes energy, generosity, and discipline to be unfailingly light-hearted. – Gretchen Rubin... “We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.” – William Shakespeare... “Happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue.” – Viktor E. Frankl... “The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation, but your thoughts about it. Be aware of the thoughts you are thinking.” – Eckhart Tolle... “Happiness is the only thing that multiplies when you share it.” – Albert Schweitzer... “Whole life is a search for beauty. But, when the beauty is found inside, the search ends and a beautiful journey begins.” – Harshit Walia... “The sole purpose of human experience is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.” – Carl Jung... “Happiness, a state of contentment and peace of mind in which virtue is its own reward.” – Immanuel Kant... “Becoming is better than being.” – Carol Dweck... “The best way to find out whether you’re on the right path? Stop looking at the path.” – Marcus Buckingham... “To live happily is an inward power of the soul.” – Aristotle... “Happiness is different from pleasure. Happiness has something to do with struggling, enduring, and accomplishing.” – George Sheehan... “Happiness is not just a place, but also a process. Happiness is an ongoing process of fresh challenges.” – Ed Diener... “The ultimate happiness is wu-wei (doing nothing contrived).” – Zhuangzi... “If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows like a shadow.” – Buddha... “Life doesn’t make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, the better for us all.” – Erik Erikson... “The self is not something one finds, it is some-

thing one creates.” – Thomas Szasz... “My life has no purpose. My life has no direction, no aim, no meaning. And yet I’m happy.” – Snoopy... “Learning to ignore things is one of the great paths to inner peace.” – Linus... “Be yourself. No one can say you’re doing it wrong.” – Charlie Brown



Sacred geometry - spiritual signs and symbols

In a bid to banish doom and gloom and surround myself with an aura of positivity, I threw myself into art and craft with renewed vigour, in response to a heart attack last year. For me, as for countless others, creativity equals therapy. It's more than mere distraction, it's cathartic: a regenerative process of emotional release and purification.

I have been fascinated by spiritual imagery in abstract art for some time, and by the many meanings cultures and religions attach to shape, shapes within shapes, and more complex configurations: sacred geometry, as it is termed.

The images collaged here, from gold and silver leaf, Chinese papers and contemporary Kapitz patterns, are cut, arranged and layered to represent spiritual symbols. I call them 'guardian angels' as they incorporate repetitive shapes symbolic of heart and mind, body, soul and spirit, life, light and love. Just like my soon-to-be-implanted pacemaker, they 'keep watch', remind me of my mortality and inspire me to fix my mind on higher things...

The CIRCLE means infinity, eternity, unity. It is the circle of life, the alpha and omega. It encapsulates the heart of things, an inner sanctuary enclosing the secrets of the soul. Symbolising wholeness and serenity, it is filled with light and love. It is also the mind upon which our thoughts and dreams are inscribed, the seat of our memories and the place of prayer.

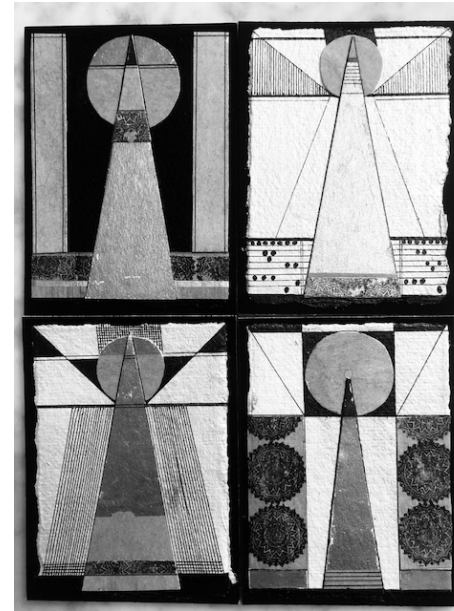
The TRIANGLE is a powerful, dynamic shape, the symbol of enlightenment, harmony, equilibrium, resilience. It is considered a beacon of hope in many religions and civilisations. Three-in-one: it portrays the trinities of past, present and future, or of body, mind and spirit. It also illustrates the concept of feet on the earth and heart in heaven.

A TRIANGLE embraced WITHIN A CIRCLE represents anima, perfection, belief, the soul pointing heavenward, a raising of consciousness, the embodiment of cosmic mystery. It is an ancient emblem of Godhead, the eye of the creator, a sign of wisdom.

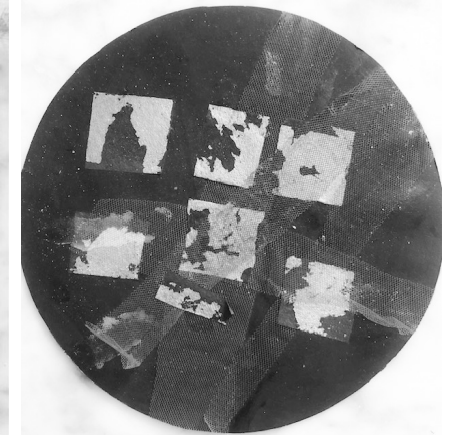
The four points of a SQUARE stand for strength, stability, security, peace, completeness and divinity. It also represents honesty, simplicity and equality.

Then there is GOLD: for energy in the form of love, light, warmth, the illuminated spirit, sources of inspiration, emanations of the soul. Gold is glorious.

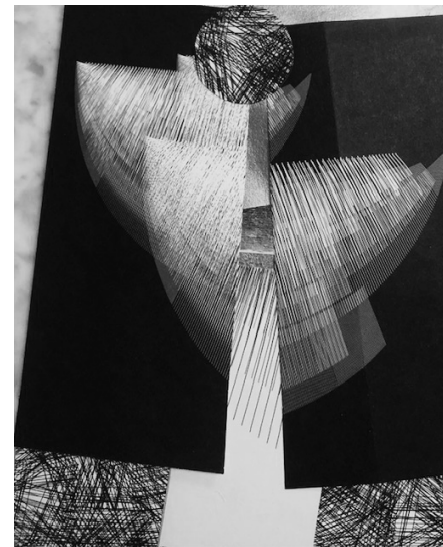
SILVER, on the other hand, symbolises clarity and purity, grace, intuition and self-reflection. Silver lights the way to the future...



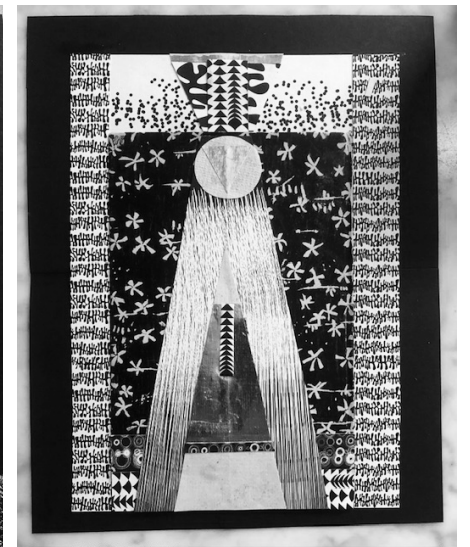
Guardian Angels



House of Spirits



Seraphim



Soul Spirit

Tick-box therapy

To all those who aren't already aware, the well-being industry is coining it, cashing into our every minor ailment, neurosis, state of mind, and wayward thought. It doesn't matter much what the nature of your affliction is, there's a perfect crystal, energy-dispensing gemstone, prophetic colour amalgamation, planetary alignment, pungent herb, asphyxiating incense, painful contortion, dermo-blasting rejuvenation cream, excruciating toe massage or gut-strangling diet to match! Far from harmful in themselves, our so-called 'new age physicians' fall prey to what they practise almost as much as we, their gullible 'clients'. Whatever the magic is, it's the mission statements you've got to watch: 'Your health is our priority...', 'We are a caring institution - well-being is at the heart of what we do...' Is it? Nope. Distraction, persuasion, moral blackmail, downright quackery, more like. In the vast majority of cases there is zero emotional investment, scant regard for the truth, and a hefty deficit of care and attention. But never mind, just tick here, here and here, and our 'consultant practitioner' will be along to see you. Consultant - my foot! He or she hasn't come out of medical school, they've just been fast-tracked through a 'feel-good' course in hot stones or healing crystals. Along with the clinically reassuring, minimalist waiting room, the crystal clear mineral water fountain, the sympathetic lighting of lava lamps, the introductory detox of distilled dandelion and complimentary vegan wafer, all the holistic psycho babble, never mind the soothing cacophony of bells, gongs and cymbals, comes death-by-therapy and all manner of associated placebos and cure-alls.

The common denominator of such manifold indignities, of course, is blind faith and more money than sense. Why should I pay so dearly to witness a random toss of the dice, feel a magnetic bracelet clamp the flow of blood through my veins, or watch coloured inks mingle with oils in a 'personalised' litmus test to know what my past, present and future health looks like? Why empty my pockets to indulge in every conceivable pseudo-scientific delusion of which we are humanly capable?

And what's with describing schools, hospitals, surgeries and social services as 'caring' and 'responsive'? So they jolly well should be! Although what you tend to find is that they don't practise what they preach as far as inter-personal relations go...

I think I can speak for many teachers when I say that we are exposed to constant scrutiny, answerability, overwork and disrespect, yet we must necessarily be mindful, unselfish, supportive, reflective and emotionally and intellectually coherent at all times! Good job staff well-being is part of the tick-box culture, too... In our last well-being seminar, presided over by the education authority, our school consultant found herself advocating the worthy ministrations of the local nail bar and hair salon as relief from pre- and post-inspection stress... For goodness sake!



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Do you want to contribute to the zine?

Have any questions?

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