

Barzakh;

Silence and the Symphony

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From the archive of desert wisdoms during the time of isolation in 'the courtyard between knowledges'.

The exhibition is a quest; a journey to understand the beauty of a perception and the vastness of the meeting point between two things. .

Meetings such as ideas and land, the inward with the corporeal, the invisible and visible: ideas that are subtle, that make visible systems of thought and synthesise stories. They are a combination of the artists experiences walking on land and listening. They reference the Afghans, those from another desert who transported water within the inland region; an idea that it is possible to walk respectfully in an unknown land. Many of the ideas in this exhibition would have been known to them.

So this is also meditation on the impetus of human to go beyond the laws of Nature. The work grapples with human action that has no relationship to the life of the land, beginning to expose a modern day absence of a perceptual faculty - the faculty responsible to understand the meeting points; or balance required for harmony.

There is a mysterious perception; what is known to traditional societies as the intellect or eye of the heart.

For this the work asks you to set aside rational thought and pause, to see the concert and perhaps to embrace paradox. Paradox bewilders the mind.

However, despite this altruistic intent, the exhibition highlights months of rational research and comparative studies between sufi, taoist, buddhist, quantumist, Indigenous and environmental understandings. There is an aim to find a meeting point, a synthesis within these systems. In the process of etching the copper many of these legible understandings disappeared. The marks became part of the landscape, mirroring the idea of the barzakh; a liminal space- here, between idea and material.

The Barzakh (isthmus) is 'what is in between' any two things. The use of the term isthmus is appealing as it is a landform (often between salt and fresh water) that lends itself to a metaphysical idea. It is both yet is neither. It separates the two things that define it but also acts as the mediator between them. It allows a place for communication. A place to meet. The most balanced, vast and spacious place on the earth.

This is a concept that is discussed and elaborated by Ibn 'Arabi, a Sufi writer from the 12th century. There are so many barzakh's, as many as one could imagine. Mentally there is subject/object. The heart is seen as the barzakh between the spirit and the ego; a place between light and shadow.

The barzakh between the invisible world and the earth, is sometimes called the Imaginal world. This is a real place mapped, one that disappears with doubt. Much could be said here, but without this interspace there is no communication between the two worlds, matter is simply matter. This is the location of what Ibn 'Arabi terms 'the Universal human'. The human who is able to balance these two worlds.

Within this space is a radical potential.

It is here that that earth comes to life and the language of Nature is read and understood.

Here, from rocks, the water springs forth forth.

To enter there is a narrow gate. The aperture is the intellect in the heart.

The Tablets:

What is immutable, that which is written in a place beyond time placed in the world in unfolding time.

Horizontal scroll:

The horizontal is a symbol for unfolding time; a meeting between the inward and outward, where the inward is given a corporeality. The barzakh between eternal and temporal, where one is able to run or fly out of time. This is the realm where symbols are developed. They are experiences of learning in the imaginal realm.

Songs for drawing water:

These are research notes on the barzakh; templates for combinations of knowledge codex/manuscript style-elliptical and slightly out of reach to of analysis. They are meditations upon where water comes from and its ability to reflect, absorb, change states and the large part it plays in the constitution of the human- a moment to pause and reflect upon what is absolutely necessary to our survival. A type of survival map.

They include ideas pertaining to the agency of perception- we have such faith in vision that we often forget what cannot be seen and in all of these images the two worlds are included in some way (the visible and the invisible). It extends also to our treatment of many things that are found in opposites.

All are copper plate etchings. They were made mostly during the drought and in the light of the absence of water flows in the Darling/Barka River. Footnotes to sources are sometimes listed in one of the corners, unfortunately usually illegible. Some points will be mentioned some points below.

(There has arisen in your heart a light that) gleams:

This is the most obvious visual delineation of the barzakh into the light and dark, and this in between where here there are tents and sheltering places. There is some poetry by Ibn 'Arabi talking about a light that arises after traversing rainless lands, lands where the heart is not present or what the heart loves is not present. In this type of arabic ode, landscape is often shared with a metaphysical idea. Like learning from nature. There is a little from the Tao, 'the 10 000 things rise and fall', so we are in the realm of multiplicity. This is where these gleams start to occur, where one is trying to navigate out of this more dark realm, where it is very hard to discern depth and exactly what is happening. There is some writing here, an alchemical idea, on how it is necessary to travel into this dark region in order to dismantle conditioning and fully expand consciousness and then bring this back up to the realm of light. There is also the seed analogy, which has to go into the dark before it grows, The way this plate began was with the seven energy centres of the

human. The top centres are in the light, sort of the more eternal region, they are actually considered to be in a different dimension, and the lower ones in the earth dimension, and imagining this way of stitching them with this figure 8.

Between purity and the mountain, a spring;

This is a meditation upon how water can simply appear. It alludes to the story of the spring that mysteriously appeared in the middle of a desert, in Mecca, due to a prayer in the situation of absolute necessity- a mother trying to save her son from dehydration-the story of Hagar and Isma'il . The poem here from the Hagar suite is contemporary. There is the small pond found (when i was trying to dig one myself) outside the fence at the HACC centre in Broken Hill that their sprinkler system fills. i was so touched by this example of thoughtfulness that kept many animals alive. A carpet design from Tabriz where Shams is from, and a consideration of symmetries that are balanced yet illogical.

Inside the breath of the compassionate there is water (mystery):

This is a contemplation of a breath with the intention of compassion, imagining what is within it is full of life and what is without is arid and waterless. This is to do i think with the agency of perception. There is a whole discourse around this- that a way of projecting onto the land actually takes water out of it. They say the English were so fearful of this unknown land they created their own 'lie of the land', from their own minds. So instead of how the first nations people interiorise a landscape, the land not being separate, we are projecting onto it. Its a very complex or mysterious thing- quantum physics understands it in some way, regarding the quality of attention and its affect on matter, matter being not quite what we once thought it was. This is an interesting discussion, Tom Cheetham has more to say on this. It is approaching the central role of the imagination. The Sufi's say the world, the real world, is created through this breath

The Universal human balances (between) the two worlds:

This is my favourite. I am not sure why. It is a meditation on the concept of the Universal Human. There is an idea that the purpose of the human on earth is to be a representative of the creative reality, a conductor of the most harmonious and perfect action. We find this in the Quran and the Tao and is elaborated in depth by Ibn 'Arabi. We can see just see the two worlds and the balance between them. It is the concept of the middle path. For example there is a variegated leaf pattern- they say the the 'universal human' understands multiplicity- the diversity of creation outwardly- yet is unified within themselves. They stand at the barzakh between the inward and the outward. Nothing is homogenised, it actually attempts to include these two things which are possibly in tension, at once. The barzakh being the point between these two things, that knows these two things but does not belong to either of them. It is a mediator, and thats what the universal human is- the mediator.

The breath and the literal (a maze):

This one is a meditation between the literal plane and the breath.

Due to an issue with the ink scraper there are all these extra lines. They are now the vertical threads joining the two worlds, warp like, which in the realm of symbolism points to the essential reality of something, outside the influences of the worldly weather systems. These ones however are within in. The barzakh absorbs and discharges everything. It is about breathing- breath is actually one of the ways to remain in the barzakh zone and avoid the downward pull- 'the science of respiration' (along with remembrance). There is a quote

from the Buddha about a state in between which has mostly been absorbed into landscape, some from alchemy and the idea of transforming base material into a more refined state.

Interiorising block 10 (to find water):

This has got to do with hours spent at Block 10, a rocky outcrop in Railway town, during the drought and the plague, when everything was so dry. That is me looking at the Pinnacles, watching a them build something that partially blocked my sight, and you know that idea of circumspection, of travelling with vision and imagining what one sees is within the self. An Arnhem Land painter once said when he saw me drawing the escarpment, 'Whatcha lookin' at its not out there' signalling the minds/inner eye and its importance for being in the land. This plate was supposed to look much different, the etching process has interacted a lot. All discursive thought disappears into landscape. The taoist idea of the valley, the importance of the yin or receptive mode figures. There is some writing from Junayd regarding the moment of triumph for the mind/ego when it opens its eye and comes to recognise the intellect of the heart, aligning with it.

From what the river knows (a contemplation):

This is the River, as something living-imagining it flowing in its eternal state and sitting by it to have a conversation, when it was completely dry. Uncle Badger said to listen to it. In the realm of cause and effect the river has actualised for our vision the consequences of greed and capital interests that are not aligned with the natural laws of life. The unaligned mind becomes a barrier to water flows. These are the two possibilities of the barzakh: mediator or barrier/partition. There is as usual much more that could be said.

A Vast Earth

This is the concept of the human having two forms, one is generic physical and one inside, the graft and the seed, and there is a barzakh between them, the imaginal form. Within this form the earth becomes vast. Once this is experienced it is not easily forgotten, and the lessons learnt there seem most natural even though they are beyond what is logically known. The text is opposing this lightness in its content. There are always these obstacles in the terrain it seems. The kangaroo is a symbol of the physical plane, 'the literal' a boundary that cannot be neglected in the search for the truth of form.

A diagram of water flows from the gardens

The main part of this is based on a description from the book of certainty by Martin Lings. I like it as it describes different eyes as apertures of perception. In arabic the word for eye, fountain and entity are the same. The senses are seen to block the flows of water from the true sense of vision, insight. I have included a line from a conversation with Uncle Badger, where we were agreeing that water and compassion are the same thing.

Standing between the Reality and Nothingness

In the sufi dictionary by the teacher Ali El Senossi, it says this, 'between Reality and Nothingness, is the supreme barzakh'. It is a difficult one as it is on the precipice of the abyss. This is poetic thinking and per-

haps is only touching on the Reality. Within this Balance the Universal Human is situated. Important dreams occur here, here a circular weaving. The barzakh as pulsations of light, always breathing.

Camping Stories: a point beyond comprehension

/search for the isthmus

our time camping upon the earth, the earth moving

Quantum grammars:

This is like when you are learning a language from a rule book and then you go to the country.

I was learning classical arabic, and we had learnt so many rules of grammar and there is this moment when the teacher says, ok those rules are only true when everything is static, now recognise them in movement, where grammatical signs manifest and change in relationship. The most subtle combinations of fluidity and structure. Taking something static and placing it in a constellation, a different time zone. These are simple plaster poured onto the inked up etching plates

Superconductor

This is what the etching plates look like. Copper is very conductive, the heart more so. The heart is the central human barzakh, negotiating light and dark.

Leaving the winter caravan.

This line of text is from the Quran, and refers to the isthmus where Moses meets the greatest teacher, the Khidr, also symbols for the heart and the rational mind. Really this a meeting of two inward forms.

‘This isthmus is the precinct of his mediation between heaven and earth, and therefore the goal of the quest for human perfection.’ (Book of certainty -Martin Lings)

In Reality this is a love story and the terrain of learning that arises within this unique resonance.