

The following is an excerpt from
Images of the Lucid Mind:
A Phenomenological Study of Lucid Dreaming and Modern Painting
(Dissertation) Michigan, UMI, 1996
By Fariba Bogzaran, PhD

Invisible Dialogue

If we are not using poetry, we are really repeating things.

Matta

This text is derived from five separate interviews and conversations between Fariba Bogzaran and the surrealist painters Roberto Matta (Matta), Gordon Onslow Ford (GOF), both who were members of the Dyanton group, along with Lee Mullican (LM), a member of the Creation group, John Anderson (JA) and a Theravada Buddhist monk Ajahn Amero (AA). These interviews took place in different countries with different questions. Themes emerged out of the interviews, hence the creation of this "Invisible Dialogue" between these artists.

"A painter has to live the reality of his paintings. Those are only words. For a painter, an inner-world is made up of spiritual content and a technique to express it. The painter has to embody both aspects. You have to get into the spirit of the world in which you are painting."

G.O.F.

"There is something very secretive there that can never be spoken of. I mean art historians for decades can try and find out what it is all about, but when it

comes right down to it, there is a spirit there and the secret orders are all carried secretly. I feel that secret orders are very important to a painter."

L.M.

"And once you have seen into the mystery a little bit and found a way to express it, then you are on your way. It is very hard to talk about."

G.O.F.

"One of the problems with words is that they leave the image behind. Images have all the content."

J.A.

"When the brain works before words, it is like waves, like an embryo before the words—and there is something that we don't know—we should shoot it and get it. That is the role of the art—to express before the words."

Matta

"I am almost afraid to explain it. I have my own kind of cosmic sense of who I am and where I am as part of these inner-spaces."

L.M.

"This is not art anymore. When you practice what I call depth painting through different stages of development in your life, you leave "art" and the art world behind. You pass that. It is hard to explain to people because to them paintings are art, but you open up another thing."

J.A.

"There is something that happens from the open mind, through your hand, and it is a great privilege to be a painter. That is the way creation happens, when something appears that has not been seen before."

G.O.F.

"These are not preprogrammed paintings. They start out and they develop, and most of the time they paint themselves. The images I paint are not understandable in the sense of representations of what we know but are felt as convincing realities through the eyes."

J.A.

"Creation is a result of experience and contemplation. It is only after much painting and contemplation that the way opens to the inner-worlds."

G.O.F.

"It takes so long to mature as a painter."

J.A.

"The painter who wants to paint bamboo, has to become bamboo." This also applies to the inner-worlds. The painter of the inner-words is the inner-world."

G.O.F.

"It is the calligrapher that has been in that empty awake state of mind. When the hand hits the paper and the ink flies, that would communicate the state of mind."

A.A.

"A painting always holds the amount of energy and depth of insight it was painted with, and its power to communicate that energy and insight fully depends on the openness of the observer."

J.A.

"That is quite something" (pointing to his painting on the wall). "God knows what it is. But for 80 years it has led me like a horse, led me to some kind of virtual landscape, a landscape of something which has no name."

Matta

"Hopefully, an inner-world painting will awaken something in someone who is sympathetic, awaken something that they haven't thought of or seen before; it is a revelation, and revelation is passed on."

G.O.F.

"I like to conceive in a very genetic way. When I conceive something, the imagination is in direction [sic] and you have to call in your genetic

memory."

Matta

"Just where that image comes from—it has to be surprising. If I am not involved with mystery and surprise, then I feel I have failed, somewhere, for myself. I have to constantly surprise myself."

L.M.

"When you pay full attention to what is happening, something surprising turns up, which is a confirmation about the creative power of the Mind."

G.O.F.

"I believe if I really feel like I know what I'm doing, then I should be doing something else."

L. M.

"I want to surprise myself. It has to be a surprise, or I would be bored. Something that comes from inside of me. It is hard to put into words. The mystery is everywhere and I might catch something."

Matta

"Little by little we can try to find out what is going on in the painting and give suggestions. Basically, it is making a transition from the separate ego to a world with its own ecology. You find that the ego becomes less and less important and that world becomes more and more important. And you get to

the state where the ego disappears and the world that is being created is the embodiment of your existence."

G.O.F.

"You cannot go to the deeper level unless you have some kind of guide. The ego cannot do that. The ego cannot take you there. You have to have some other guide, this is part of the development of the mind—that this exists, this particular creature, this is a reality, you know."

J.A.

"It is totally real. It is like two different spectrums. The conceptual mind that is normal to everyday function. That is looking at it from the outside. But from inside, that mind is of nature, that fundamental quality of being."

A.A.

"We are not grasping things, you see, and this kind of grasping needs a language, which is psychological morphology."

Matta

"When the conceptual mind tries to grasp that state of mind, it can't find anything to grab, so the conceptual mind says 'it is empty and nothing is there; it is not of any importance.' But it is only because that mentality is used to thinking in terms of things to find, objects, images. So that quality of Mind, realization, knowledge, is such that it is empty of the creations of the conceptual mind."

A.A.

"We just see the top of that tree. What goes there is inner-space, the grass, the seeds and all that. They are all part of the inner-space. I can marvel at the night sky, like in New Mexico where there is this most incredible sky possible. But the outer space is not as deep as the one that I can visualize. It is an outer, inner space."

L.M.

"There are all kinds of implications of other worlds if we could only see. In the woods here, I am sure one tree can talk to another tree at the other end of the woods. There is a conversation between the trees.

G.O.F.

"You can even ask things from running water, of a tree: protect me, guide me."

L.M.

"In the inner-world, every object is one with the space around it. It doesn't end with its own boundary. It has energy which goes beyond it. There is only one creative force in the universe, and the painter has to become a part of it."

G.O.F.

"I feel that secret orders are very important to a painter. That is why I hesitate to write any philosophical discussion of what I am about or even speak of it because I think that as an artist I too, you see, am carrying secret orders.

There is something very secretive there that can never be spoken of, there is a spirit there and the secret orders are all carried secretly."

L.M

"It has to do with the spiritual dimension of the painter. Painting an inner-world implies the growth of consciousness and the painting helps the growth of consciousness and the growth of consciousness helps the painting."

G.O.F.

"I kind of exist on several different planes and they interact with each other, although they are all within an inner-space. So, on one plane I am very cosmic, and on the other plane I may be more in tune to what is around me in nature, folk art and the art of the people."

L.M.

"I am not just a painter, I am the white in the egg. I am a mystic. I am divine. I believe in religion that goes beyond words. I am a mis-tick!"

Matta

I was like this space here (pointing to his painting). There was no Anderson or John; it was really bits and pieces floating around in the space, and the space was particle, and I was particle like this space. I was happy and didn't have any complaints. I was floating all over the place. There was no me. The "I" was just a little fragment."

J.A.

"Once you start using spontaneity; you get to the point of absolute truth. You have to trust what appears. What appears is a kind of phenomenon and you learn to respect it. If you can get into the spirit of the creative force of the universe, you are part of creation. It is marvelous."

G.O.F.

"These (referring to his drawings) are inner beings. This is also part of the inner-world. It comes out of a feeling, but not an intellect. I am trying to get feeling out of that—not the story lines. That is where the eye goes directly to the heart, and the soul opens up. Something, without being pretty, attracts your attention and opens that up."

J.A.

"If you could pay attention to the nature of the world as you are making it, you disappear into that naturally. You don't do it by thinking about it. It is something that happens."

G.O.F.

"I enter that world through my marks. As Gordon has his line, circle and dots, I just have my marks. It is mark, mark, mark, mark, mark, mark, mark, mark, mark and sometimes these become lines and so each mark is like a cell, like a molecule which we are all made up of."

L.M.

"Inner-world painting is dealing to a great extent with the unknown. It is making an aspect of the unconscious, conscious."

G.O.F.

"Once it is known, it is no longer from the unknown. It hasn't arrived from some other place, so it is a very peculiar band in there that is very hard to explain."

J.A.

"My paintings are dealing with all these experiences which we don't have the equipment to remember fully unless we do something about it like sing or dance or paint and then the experience is revived or recreated."

G.O.F.

"As you go in, I discover that the levels of paintings that you descend into in a systematized way almost approach liberation. This thing we all go through. For me, it was the personal unconscious you first have to contact. This is the barrier between you and going any deeper."

J.A.

"I have always worked closer to the surface than Gordon. Gordon involves himself in great depths and I have done that on occasion but on the whole, I am right there on the surface, hopefully in a very metaphysical contemplative way—a contemplative surface that the eye and the mind can handle. But as a painter, what bothers me the most about painting is the confinement of the technique itself—a concept of a stretched canvas or a piece of paper or something like that. So I often feel that I want to be removed from that."

L.M.

"This is one of the first ones I did after meeting Gordon. I started to do fast paintings influenced by automatism. Very rapid, unthought-about paintings. I began to do things by the opening to the primeval landscape that everybody has in them. It is the first step into the real unconscious. "

J.A.

"Experiencing the unconscious is too fast to be remembered until it is expressed. Our memory is not equipped to handle certain space-times, so spontaneous painting is reminding us that there are other space-times."

G.O.F.

"They are the Void, the unknown."

Matta

"It comes from the mysterious place that I have called the Great Spaces of the Mind shared by all. The Void is something. The Void is not a negation, it is a root of all that exists. It is too fast for our senses to catch and it has possibilities beyond belief."

G.O.F.

"Emptiness/Void is a relative term. Even though we use the term like emptiness, it is that quality of mind, or state of knowledge which is empty of our personalized creation; empty of delusion and disillusion but in some way, it is full. It is completely alive and luminous. The mind's original nature is limitless."

A.A.

"It is the mystery inside us."

Matta

"It is amazing how the Mind wants to help us grow. I feel that the Mind wants to aid creation." G.O.F.

"This experience is one of a tremendous power and liberation. It is seeing things from a different dimension. Like having to be an essential element in the equation. That element is exactly what brings the mind to a much more profound and true realization of the nature of things, although from the conceptual point of view it is partial." A.A.

"I depend on that automatic action to tell me where I might be going. As I said, it is total mystery and surprise." L.M.

"Once I painted my way out, I am like you—I have to now come at it from outside and awaken the inside again." J.A.

"The role of art, mythology, dreams is all part of the same system to awaken to our own nature." A.A.

"A painter is a kind of person who can enter the worlds that he is painting, feel the reality of it, know what it is. You enter the world by creating it and contemplating what you have created." G.O.F.

"I am trying to open up my own being so that the image is more liberated. It is an effort to open to the unknown." J.A.

"In the Great Spaces of the Mind travel is of greater dimensions. They are much faster. Dreams are just a little bit faster than rational thought, but Great Spaces of the Mind can move at enormous speed, although one is not particularly aware of it."

G.O.F.

"These are primordial landscapes. This is something everybody goes through. They hit the primeval landscape and it opens up for them a realm that is quite extraordinary, which is just before being human. This is a landscape that doesn't have the human in it, but it is a reflection of a real part of the inner-world."

J.A.

"They (refers to scientists) don't know what it is all about. What they tell you is very insufficient."

Matta

"You know we all are dealing with mysteries. So, really the interest is not to explain it away, it is to express it and enjoy it. We really don't know anything. We don't know the simplest things."

G.O.F.