

## Sheepwoman on Dreams

*A friend of mine recently interviewed me about my work and in particular about my relationship to dreams and dreaming. Below is an extract from that interview.*

How influential are your dreams and in what ways do you explore them?

Dreams have been hugely influential in my life, I cannot imagine my life without my dream life nor can I separate my dreaming life from the way I live, see the world, and the way in which I engage with the world as an artist. To me dreaming is a language, composed of images, characters and flashes of inspiration and clues – intuition and is an essential part of my life, like breathing.

A huge amount of my artistic practice is based upon the exploration of dreams, attempting to bring dream images into waking reality, to see what occurs when images are dredged up, what feedback there is, and how this conscious reflection on my dreams informs and develops both my artistic practice and my night time forays into the dream world. I feel as if I am working night and day and it can sometimes be emotionally exhausting.

<http://philippajeffery.blogspot.de/2013/12/dream-drawings.html>

I liken my dreaming practice to my drawing practice; when you draw people, places, landscapes you start to see more, you are exercising your visual memory as you develop your drawing abilities. With dreaming it's the same, the more you are able to recall your dreams, the more you dream, and the more you recall. Then when you start to "draw- up" the dreams into waking life there can be a meeting point between inner and outer realities. This is quite a coarse description as 'inner' and 'outer' are in a constant flow of relationship and endlessly impact upon one another. For more on my approach to drawing see:

<http://globalsheepwomanresearchlaboratory.blogspot.de/2012/04/dreaming-and-drawing.html>

<http://globalsheepwomanresearchlaboratory.blogspot.de/2012/04/gifts-of-drawing.html>

I think that my overarching aim as an artist is to bring together the inner and outer worlds through images - drawn up from the unconscious and from the body (both of which can be seen as the same entity). I'm not sure how many images I've made that are really successful in doing this, but the process and intention is always the same whether it's a drypoint etching, a text, a drawing, or a 'Sheepwoman' performance. To my mind the forms and techniques, the media used is less important than the process of bringing up unconscious material and seeing what happens with it in the light of day.

My exploration of dreams has mainly been through a fairly regular process of writing and drawing my dream recollections and I have kept this practice going for nearly twenty years, at least since I was 22. The first step is simply to make the time and space to recall my dreams, possibly using a mind-map or simply writing and drawing the aspects of the dream that seem to be the most significant. If an image is particularly striking I may go on to draw it on a larger scale, or to explore the dream in other ways for example through a performance.

In my twenties I was often flooded with dreams, and recall a number of 'big' dreams that left a huge impression on me. In fact my final show at art school was an attempt to 'seek a psychological landscape within the architecture of the building' based on such a dream.

In the dream I'm lost on a mountain, my task is to deliver three masks. One is incredibly heavy, one medium weight and the third is as light as a feather. On the journey on this mountain several mishaps occur, my motorbike breaks down and I lose my way. I come to a kind of barrier on the mountain where I can't go any further and have to find a way to let go of the masks on a ledge.

In response I made a series of installations throughout the building centring around the lift shaft that went from the basement to the top floor.

After Art College, in my studio in Oxford, I made other early attempts at 'drawing up' images from dreams these took the form of very simple mono-prints often of a single image that struck me from a dream. I have rarely shown these works.

For many years I recorded my dreams and worked with them alone, but later in my thirties, I worked with a Jungian Psychotherapist for about six years. This way of working with dreams with another person was very helpful and enlightening and enabled me to contain my vivid nighttime adventures.

I learnt how to amplify specific images, characters and stories in dreams and not be completely bogged down or overwhelmed by every image and story line. In this crucible of psychotherapy my performance character "Sheepwoman" was born.

<http://globalsheepwomanresearchlaboratory.blogspot.de/2011/10/beginnings.html>

I see Sheepwoman as the embodied mediator between my conscious and unconscious mind – having said that it does not mean that I can always trust her - she can be a bit wild and lead me down all kinds of garden paths, dead ends, and wrong turns, I like to trust my instinct but sometimes she is horribly wrong!

Since I created Sheepwoman I have been attempting to explore the relationship between my inner and outer worlds through her - exploring what happens when a character from my dreamworld enters into waking life and into relationship with her 'audience' whether that be on the street, at parties, in galleries or festivals. A recent development was to cast "Sheepwoman" as a psychotherapist in a short film made during a residency in Berlin in the summer of 2013, a number of actors were cast who then shared their dreams with Sheepwoman.

See: <http://youtu.be/r8lUESNJLIaf> for a preview of the film.

I have recently started to make collages in response to very vivid dreams, I find the medium particularly sympathetic to the otherworldly and absurd quality of my dreams and I am able to quickly and graphically give form and shape to the images I see during sleep. Sneak previews of these collages may be shared on my blog in the coming months.

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