

Playing and Reality

(What AHP people really look like in a workshop)

Patricia Welles

As a new member of AHP, having never attended an AGM for anything in my entire life, I had to pluck up courage to go to Colin McGee's Art Workshop which was the curtain-raiser to this year's AGM, held in May. In this case the curtain-raiser became the play.

I was late to the workshop and it had already begun. Ten people were seated at a large rectangular table drawing pictures of each other. I was instructed to do the same and told that it did not matter whether I could draw. I liked the idea and immediately grabbed some coloured pencils. I chose a beautiful woman sitting opposite. Her hair was alive, a wonderful pre-Raphaelite tangle. I needed many colours to capture the tangle; red, pink, orange, brown, black, blue and green. I made her eyes green although they were not (mine are!).

I knew no one at the table but had spoken to David Jones a few times on the telephone. My drawing of bright-eyed David was of a young man. I don't know how old he is and I don't want to know, either, but he did mention the Second World War and drew a tiny warplane in the corner of one of his drawings!

Ruth Finer was drawn with bright red hair although her hair is actually salt and pepper. A man named Karl sat next to me. I

did him in profile: a wonderful beak-nose, purple hair, a green beard.

Each successive drawing was shorter in time and smaller in space which made it rather exciting and hilarious. The almost last one was only two seconds and all anyone could make was a squiggle. The very last one was on shaped paper which had been cut from a large rectangle like pieces from a puzzle. After we drew 'where we had come from' we fitted all the pieces of the rectangle back together so that there was a group drawing which covered the table. We then completed the individual parts by finishing them with 'where we were going'. We could have drawn over the boundaries to draw on someone else's drawing, but no one did. We were either too inhibited, too polite, too narcissistic, or just plain brain-washed in person-centred introjects.

Thereafter we walked silently and respectfully around the table to view everyone's work on the group picture. A modest discussion on how we felt about the drawings ensued.

When I got home I placed the drawings on my bed and examined them. I noticed that each one of my drawings seemed to evoke an essence of the person. It was not that any drawing actually looked like the person. Unconsciously I had discovered a

Patricia Welles is a writer who is doing a professional training to become a psychotherapist.

visual trigger as a pathway into some important quality of the person. David Jones's vibrance and his expansive personality were there on the page. He was a twenty-five year old, the glow of youth in his rosy cheeks. Ruth Finer's secret passionate nature and Karl's true eccentricity had been captured. I particularly liked a very economical drawing I did of Julian Nangle as a kind of Cocteau sprite. When we were discussing the group drawing he said he had written 'Nowhere' on his because he was not going anywhere, he was already there. I really liked that. When I look at my drawing which is in one colour of forest brown I do believe I have captured his archetypal sprite.

Colin McGee moved the drawings along by posing for us, and he had the good taste

to bring a jazz tape compilation of Billie Holiday, Paul Desmond and others. I have various rapid and incomplete squiggles of Colin, a kind of outline of his psychic energy, and one drawing where he sat in a chair for what seemed a very long time. In the last drawing of him I did not draw in his eyes behind his glasses. When I looked at it later I understood that he was looking inward and that I had drawn his shyness. Interestingly, he said not a word at the AGM.

The workshop was a hell of a lot of fun and I have my drawings to remind me how enjoyable and revealing it was for me. This was the Playing, and then there was the Reality — the AGM. Someone else will have to report on this. I'm better at Playing.

