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A Photo Reverie: Creative Synthesis in Intuitive Inquiry

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Creative synthesis is the last phase of heuristic research where the researcher uses his or her tacit and intuitive understanding of the research findings to synthesise and portray these findings through a creative medium. In this short paper and accompanied photo-reverie, the author demonstrates how he used a creative synthesis in an intuitive inquiry to portray the inner dimensions of his research into the transpersonal implications of singing.

Keywords: *creative synthesis, intuitive inquiry, qualitative research, singing, singing altered states of consciousness, singing mysticism, singing synaesthetics*

A *creative synthesis* is a term coined by Clark Moustakas (1990) to characterize the integrative phase of heuristic research, where the researcher, using his or her tacit and intuitive understanding of the research findings, synthesizes and portrays these findings through a creative medium such as through poetry, art, or story:

The creative synthesis can only be achieved through tacit and intuitive powers. Once the researcher has mastered knowledge of the material that illuminates and explicates the question, the researcher is challenged to put the components and core themes into a creative synthesis. This usually takes the form of narrative depiction utilising verbatim materials and examples, but it may be expressed as a poem, story, drawing, painting, or by some other creative form. (pp. 31-32)

Underlying the creative synthesis is a process of self-searching, propelled by multiple ways of knowing—the tacit knowledge and intuition that accompanied the researcher throughout the heuristic study. “The researcher must move beyond any confined or constricted attention to the data itself, and permit an inward life on the question to grow, in such a way that a comprehensive expression of the essences of the phenomenon investigated is being realized” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32).

The photo reverie that follows, constitutes a creative synthesis of my research into the transpersonal implications of singing—a doctoral dissertation study conducted between the years 2006 and 2011 at the

Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. Its purpose was to explore, through visual art and contemplative poetry, the meditative and mystical experience of singing and the consequent insight described by classically trained singers who participated in the research, as well as my own experience as participant-researcher. My intention was to catalyze in the reader, within the confines of the printed page, an intuitive understanding of the deeper experience of singing (Freinkel, 2011, 2014). In the process of preparing this article, the following three questions were posed by guest editor Dorit Netzer. She noted that although the reader will find a more in-depth report of this study earlier in this issue of IJTS, it would be interesting to know: (a) whether this creative synthesis stands alone, (b) if so, what qualities does it evoke in the reader and viewer that echo the study’s findings, and (c) does the creative synthesis, by virtue of its contemplative nature, open the original inquiry question to future exploration? (D. Netzer, Personal communication, March 6, 2015).

Singing and Light

The research method used was intuitive inquiry. Intuitive inquiry requires the researcher to report on their intuitive process throughout the research (Anderson, 2011). Like others before me, for example Dorit Netzer (2008) and Joanne Hitchcock-Bridges (2009), and in alignment with the topic, method, and my creative nature as a transpersonal researcher, I “borrowed” the creative synthesis from the heuristic process and included it within cycles 4 and 5 of my intuitive inquiry. This served not only to synthesize my findings but also, in discussing the creative synthesis,

enabled me to report on my intuitive process as required by the research method (Freinkel, 2011, pp. 120-147).

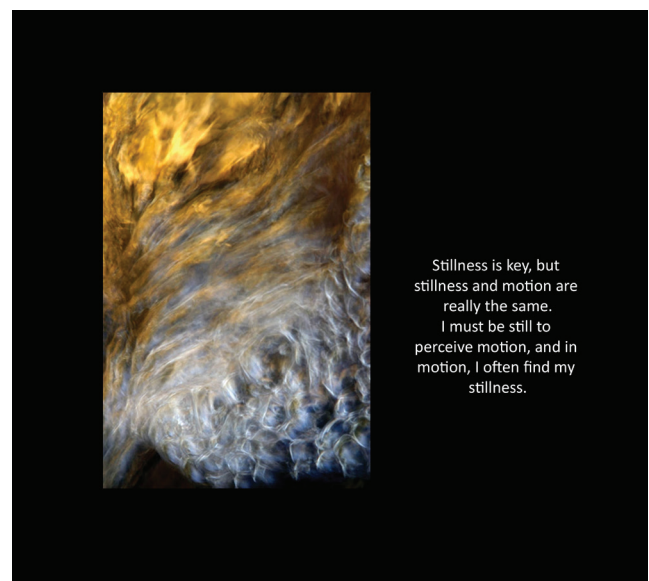
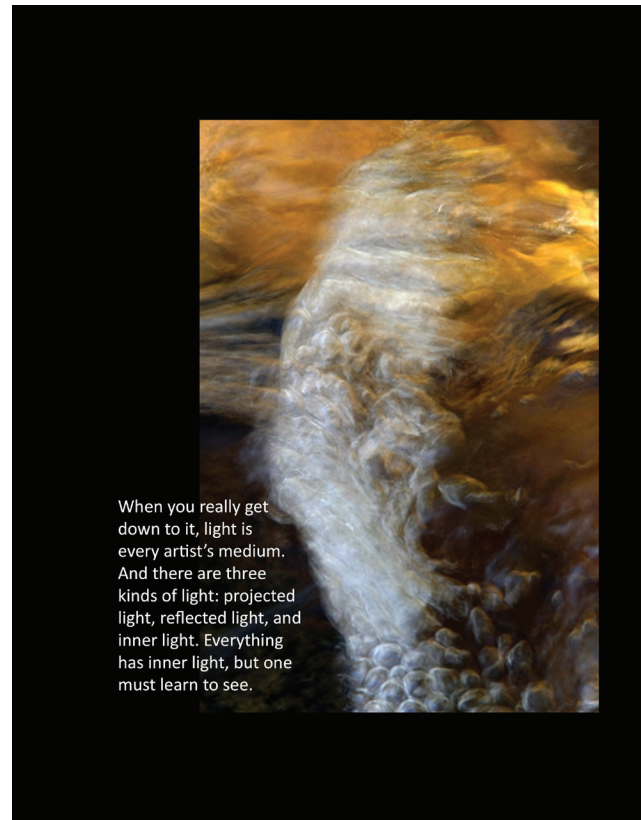
Many participants in my study, myself included as participant-researcher, described inner experiences combining music, light, insight, and deep embodied knowing. One participant, for example, described becoming a vessel of light as she sang (Freinkel, 2011, p. 112), another described everything becoming “shimmery” (p. 128). One singer-participant described a synesthetic experience, state of deep stillness, luminosity and unity consciousness (p. 86), and another described a state of prescience and vision of her future (p. 99). Taken as a whole, I observed how singers found an inner stillness through their singing; this inner stillness enabled them sometimes to channel through their singing what they perceived as a powerful flow of inner creativity and deep spiritual knowing. This state of inner knowing was deeply embodied, and was often accompanied by an experience or vision of light. My own experience was that, on occasion, singing brought me to an intuitive perception of an inner life and light permeating me and my immediate environment, and this was accompanied by a deep experience of loving and being loved. My creative synthesis intuitively integrated the above inner experiences of singing, taking the form of the following photo-reverie.

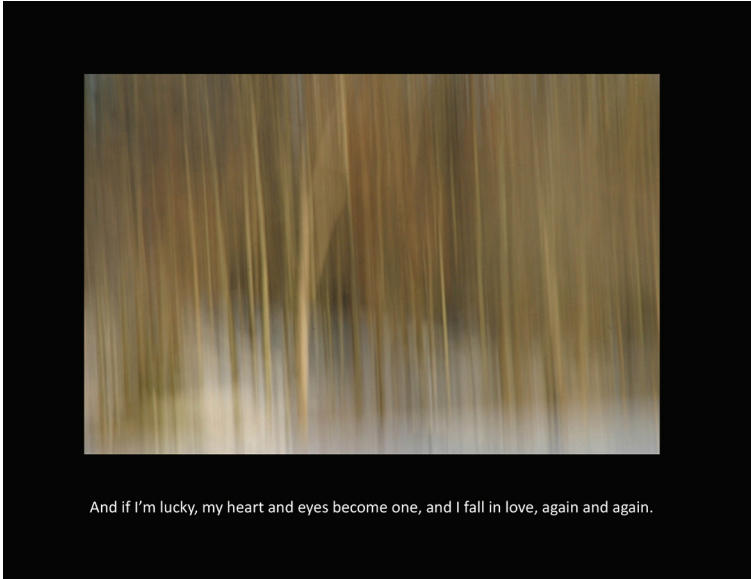
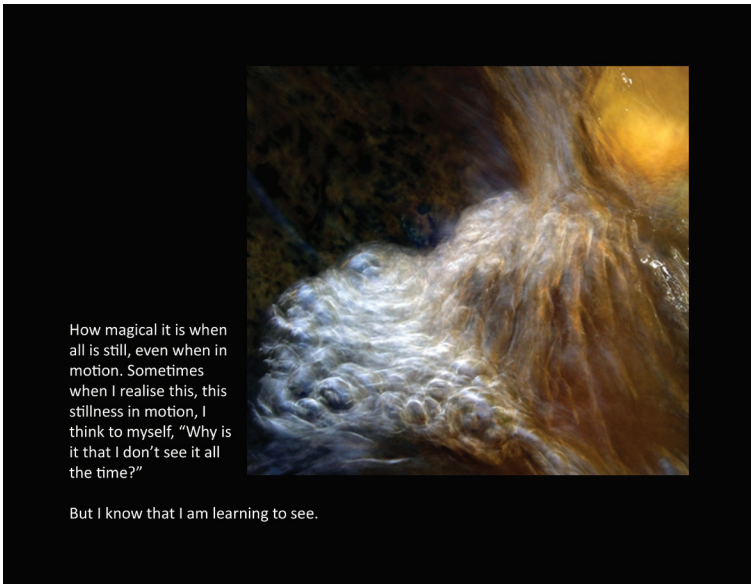
Process and Synthesis

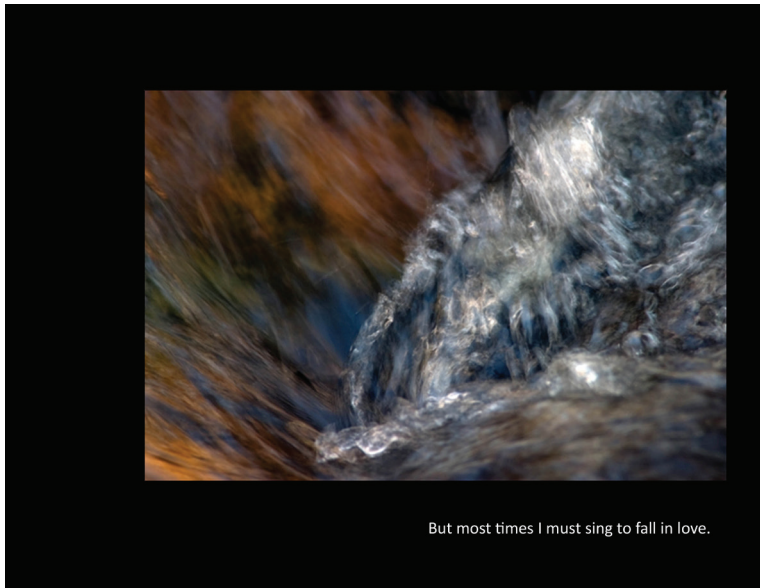
The photographs for the photo reverie were taken throughout the dissertation process, largely concurrent to my singing. I found myself contemplating and enjoying the photographs, and sharing them with my participants. A confluence of meaning emerged between the photographic imagery, my experience of singing, the academic literature I was reading at the time, and the experiences shared by the singer participants in my study. This contemplation constituted periods of solitude and meditation, focusing on the research, that are “the essential preparatory steps for the inspiration that eventually enables a creative synthesis” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32). The poetic verse came to me during a later period of solitude, ultimately resulting in the combination of words and photographs, an excerpt of which follows.

This photo reverie became a way to tacitly communicate the intuitive, synesthetic experience of the deeper and participatory nature of singing that I had come to understand through my research into the transpersonal implications of singing. In the spirit of intuitive inquiry’s resonance validity (Anderson

& Braud, 2011, p. 297), I invite you, the reader, to consider this creative synthesis, alone and in conjunction with my paper in this publication entitled *Singing and Participatory Spirituality*, and see for yourselves whether the device has served its intended purpose.







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About the Author

Paul Freinkel, MD is a medical doctor in private practice in Johannesburg, South Africa, and teaches on the doctoral programme of the Gordon Institute of Business Science, South Africa. He is a trained singer and exhibiting fine art photographer and completed his PhD (part of which is included and reported as this paper)

A Photo Reverie

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