

Sounding Bowls

Opening Hearts Across the World

by Tobias Kaye: Designer and sole maker worldwide

Creativity Between The Poles Of Experience.

This I offer, my offering in the pursuit of Art. — Art shall be Love created from the heart of life.

What are the poles of human experience?
Birth Lies before memory begins.
Death lies beyond where our knowledge goes.

Yet they accompany us all the way:
What are fear and despair but the shadow of death?
What are joy and enthusiasm but the handmaidens
of birth?

How do I live between these consuming emotions
unless I myself create a bridge?

The very act of living is creating a bridge between
birth and death. Each of us is the author of our own
biography. The more that we include polarities in our
daily existence the richer life becomes.

The act of marrying warring factions in the soul is a
creative act that engenders life in the soul. A life that
can enlighten our surroundings and our fellow human
beings (John 1:4)

Two examples:

1.) I read that psychology has established a connection
between creativity and being brought up by parents
with widely opposing world views. It would seem that
children of parents who concur on the nature of life are
less likely to be creative. Within the child those warring
opinions have elicited creativity in order to create
harmony.

2.) Masculine and feminine express polarity in life
very well. Bring these two together and creativity can
extend right down into the physical, forming a new
human body.

Essentially I am writing about Sounding Bowls, so let
me tell you about the polarities married in these.

The origins of them lie in Music and in Wood. A fairly
polar pair. Music for me was in learning piano, penny

whistle and in song. What surprised me was that when
I began working wood music making ceased. Another
pair of opposites emerged. My concept of The Perfect
Form and the grossly imperfect results of my
craftsmanship. I struggled to unite them. To create
harmonious forms As my work improved I began to
notice acoustic results from the Bowls' interior spaces.
Music began to emerge again

I fitted strings to the bowls and suddenly the form
breathed sound. Music came back into my life. Unlike
before, the music I was now making was of use to
others. They could through the physical musical
potential of my work make their own music.

Each Sounding Bowl now became a wrestling with
enthusiasm and despair. Could I conjure the
harmonious forms that breathed music into the lump of
dead tree in front of me? Or would this be another
failure.

Also within each Sounding Bowl, opposites are held
together. Held by the artistic tension between circle and
straight line, held by the physical tension of the strong
rim resisting the huge tension of the strings, held by the
contrast between this required strength and the delicate
thinness of the central circle, which in order to resonate
with the high notes is only as thick as the head of a
match. Into each instrument goes the concern to find a
balance between the technical demands of an
instrument and the artistic demands of a sculpture.

Such a balance as the amount of distortion to be allowed to build in the Sounding Bowl. The pull of the strings moves the turned circle into an arching form seen most clearly in Sounding Bowl No.32 (below). While visually most attractive, too much arching makes the Sounding Bowl loath to hold its tune. Some arching, in stressing the wood helps to enrich the tone.



Once I realised that stressed wood yields a richer tone I connected it with the fact that a closer grain structure and richer colour with enhanced lustre are well known results of wood that has grown under stress. I then began to seek out wood that had been stressed in growth and found that almost any part of a tree that had lived with and survived stress gave wood with a richer tone. The enhanced colour and lustre of such timber is an important added bonus where sculpture and instrument meet.

Finding pre-stressed wood is sometimes a matter of choosing the right tree. This might be a tree that has grown on a steep slope or in a strong prevailing wind or has suffered in a forest fire. Then there are particular parts of almost any tree that live with stress: A reliably good source is that part of a tree where it faces the pain of decision making, The path must divide. What was one must become two. The tree divides into two major branches where it was one trunk. As it approaches the point of division the grain weaves this way and that as though unable to decide which path to follow. In weaving it knits the tree together so that the wind will not tear it limb from limb. So in decision making we can look back on our deliberations of indecision and re-assure ourselves that we did consider the matter deeply. Thereby blasts of disapproval from the world may be withstood. Managing such stress in human and tree seems to deepen the responsiveness of each. In the tree's wood, audibly so.

Such poles exist within most musical instruments. At the birth of European stringed instruments Apollo stood with a tortoise shell in his hand and out of his inner creativity

he saw how the music of the spheres (later much sought as direct experience in the Greek mystery temples) could be conjured into earth as represented by the shell of the earthbound, weight bearing creature of patience and perseverance. So you still see in Greek Lyre pictures how the strings radiated out, each pointing to a different star, drawing their music into the hard shell of earthly pain.

From making the first Sounding Bowl long before therapists began to use them I was hoping to bridge the gulf between Sound and Form, instrument and sculpture. I hoped to make something that, while viable as a sculptural form could sound with music. I hoped that those who define themselves as non musical could look and listen without ruling it out of their world as an instrument.

Through those many people who use my Sounding Bowls in therapy this hope has become a reality. For these this gap has been bridged. In healing many have found difficult opposites in need of reconciliation. Isn't the very act of healing the bridging of gulfs? In dis-ease many of us experience *directly* un-reconciled opposites within. It is in wrestling with these that we find healing.

Medicine for the American Native tribes meant bridging the gap between the spiritual and the physical. Their creativity was devoted toward this, their healing came through this.

It is the immense tension of opposing truths that creates the energy that lives in true creativity. Holding the tension between them, living in the pain of holding un-reconciled ideas is hard. The middle way is not the way of least resistance. In exploring deeper into the tension of polarity, deepening my experience of this painful unknowing I have found it to be the gateway to a healing creativity. An abundant well spring of Life.

And so polarity becomes trinity. Creativity is revealed as the spirit that can reconcile the struggle of being human, becomes the answer each human can offer to the Gods, becomes the Holy Spirit.

