

# The Dream that Creates: Craft becomes Art, Becomes Re-creation.

Did you know that the Aboriginals of Australia spoke of the tree, as of all created beings as awake and participating in the life of the world?

When a tree dies it was felt to be sleeping and the forms that became of it were the dreams of it's sleeping being.

Forms given to the wood by man, by termites, by weather, are to them the dreams of the sleeping tree. A craftsman living in this culture feels himself to be part of the tree's active dreaming when he chooses to create something from wood.

For the Aboriginals the dreamtime is the time of creation. Be that "in the beginning..." in the Christian, sequential image of time or in the centre of the wheel of time in the Buddhist image. Both are valid and relevant to the Aboriginal who feels the creation to be happening now. There, just behind the screen of everyday awareness, Creation; First Beginnings are at work.

When we create something ourselves, as human beings we part the veil of awareness and participate in that creation flow through which all things come into being.

It might be an act of hand, laying on paint or carving a boomerang, Didgeridoo or eating vessel, it might be an act of speaking, telling the tales that define who we are, the creation mythology, which to western man can seem to be quaint myth but actually for all of us defines the essential nature of our being,

Or it might be actually sleeping and dreaming, while within the hidden nature of our lives, within that counterpart that we enact in our sleep; that balance to the acts of the daytime consciousness.

Whatever way you view it the Dreamtime enfolds and expresses the creative nature of human life, that place where we become part of the Creator Being.

For me as a woodturner, a maker of round things from wood, using a hand held tool on wood that spins, the act of placing wood on the lathe to form it into sculpture or instrument, or even simple dining bowl is an act of offering to change the world. In one small way the tree dreams and I peel shavings in a stream from the substance the tree spent years slowly adding, cell by cell, layer by layer to it's presence in the world.

By carefully following the structure of the wood in how I present the gouge I can cut in such a way that the wood does not protest as it flows from shape to shape under my hands. Seeing a curve that is not there till the gouge has laid it into the wood I know when to stop because the shape I see in front of me is now the same as the shape I saw in my imagination before I began.

Where did the image in my imagination come from?

Has the tree dreamt this event before I began it?

Or as I do it?

Am I a part of the tree's dream, or is the wood part of the dream to be a creative woodworker that grew in me in my youth?

Or are we both part of someone else's dream? A greater being who, in Aboriginal perception created the whole world and everything in it. A Logos being, creating the world, even now as we stand here holding it in our hands.

This image of the world as flow, as process of continual coming into being is so much richer and fresher than the western 'big bang' image of creation. Far from being a machine that is slowly running down to destruction, the world we see through the dreamtime is a world coming into being in every moment, flowing from the immutable into the dichotomous chaos of existence in which night is divided from day and I divided from you by bonds of incomprehensible love.

Big bang relies on the preconception that there is no spirit, matter is all. However even with our stunning mastery of subatomic physics materialism has not provided a satisfactory explanation for the existence of consciousness. The Aborigine, in common with so many people of all cultures experience spirit directly. For the Aborigine, consciousness precedes physical existence, itself coming out of intricate networks of love that for all their web of relationships still allow each human to be separated from another by gulfs of misunderstanding, gulfs exacerbated by pursuits such as individual wealth that run contrary to community cohesiveness, the one form of love that can unite individuals in the longer term.

This flow from the immutable in the moment, this concept of continual creation out of spirit into matter has not been broken by the 'modern' concept (growing in popularity since ancient Greece) that matter is all there is. In spite of what we now think the flow goes on, it's just that when we don't believe in it we no longer notice it. Slipping into the creative dream, as we do that bit more easily alone in a workshop creates more than just woodware; it creates us. Recreation is not haphazardly named, it is a necessary force in our lives that I find at the wood-lathe, others in their own dreamtime moments.

As a craftsman I mourn the coming of the machine age. It's necessary contribution to human development has created a time in which we are all so much poorer, so much more lonely, so much more confused as to who is the Human Being.

A mere two hundred years ago the average life, the average house was filled with the touch of the human hand. Floors of stone or wood, sawn or cleft by hand. Furniture planed or adzed with strokes of individual human intention. Cloth hand woven and china hand thrown.

Now we drive our cars, sit in front of screens, eat delicious prepared meals, all without contacting any trace of the human creative process. Where is the dreamtime now? Where is that inner space in which we can re-create ourselves?

You may respond that the machine age has brought a wealth and security that was unknown before. Is that really true if considered on a world scale I wonder? Has it not simply created a time in which the rich nations can benefit from the poor ones? Making us more secure and exporting peasant poverty to where we no longer see it?

Truly it seems to me *lonely* to be surrounded by only the uncaring products of the machine compared to how it was when everything we touched or saw was directly related to another human being. Is it any wonder that we need holidays, spas and retreats today when the very creative act has been stolen from us in order that we might have more possessions.

It seems as though almost every creative act has been given over to the machine so that things we need may become so cheap that we can all afford the sort of luxury that only kings could hope for a few hundred years ago. The words of John Ruskin ring in my ears. That wise Victorian seer of the direction of things.

Ruskin said:

*"There is hardly anything in the world that some man cannot make worse and sell a little cheaper. People who consider price above all else are this mans lawful prey"*

This really describes all of us today: It has become a ridiculous luxury to seek things that are well made when we have such a huge choice of the same thing at stunningly low prices. And on those occasions that we do seek quality we often find that what we have got is not higher quality at all, just better marketed. Thus the dreamtime, that quiet space in the simple home in which sufficient and good existed in place of masses of tat: That dreamtime is gone.

Even our own minds are invaded with repetitious outlines of yesterdays news, yesterdays drama, contentious arguments we hold with people not in this moment with us. Recovery of the dreamtime is an imperative for our society, but we do not know where to turn for it. Some may advocate returning to a rustic past, others saturation in the new, be it a new religion or more shopping.

My own answer is to *make* things.

The craftsman's workshop is a world removed from the fast lane. I know hundreds of people in all walks of life who make the journey to the garden shed regularly, there to immerse themselves in making things. It might be pottery, it might be furniture or stained glass work. The very act of making something that was not there when you started is to touch on the dreamtime. The simpler the process the deeper you can go. Assembling factory produced components, even into new and intriguing patterns is not so satisfying as moulding mud from the earth and firing it into tableware or (my own favourite) sawing chunks from fallen trees and shaping new forms from them.

There are two things that happen here that refresh the soul. The first is the act of creation, the "I Made That" feeling arising when one surveys a personal creation. The second is mastering the material. This is the slowly acquired skill of craftsmanship. It is that subtle mix of sensitivity and control that one needs in bringing up children, in learning to ride a bike, in any ongoing interaction with "other", matter or person. In woodwork this means listening to the wood, feeling how it responds to the tool, seeking that cut that leaves the wood silky smooth, not torn or rough.

In both of these activities one enters the dreamtime. The mind departs from the normal obsession with self and enters into relationship with the Creator through created matter and through one's own ability to give new form to things. Making things in this way becomes a meditation, one is listening closely to the body of the world as well as filling one's empty self with the mantra of new form, shall it be a softly rounded form or an excitingly crisp one? How does the material want me to approach this moment of forming it?

Given practice, this meditative approach to Craftsmanship reveals truly remarkable things. The forming nature of the universe is laid out for the 'dreamtime' soul to contemplate. Acts of creation become acts of worship. True care in craftsmanship is rewarded in creative ideas or burgeoning skills with form or material. You begin to bring things into the world that inspire others and contribute to a quality of life for many. How different is this from the moulding machine or computer controlled cutter that makes what we normally use!

For each person the results of seeking a living relationship with the moment and with a chosen material are different, yet they move along the same the path. A path of re-uniting self with Creator and the inner self with Nature

Somehow the Love that lies at the heart of Creation flows through the creative act.  
And hearts open to real, hand made beauty like flowers to the sun.

- Tobias Kaye, creator of Sounding Bowls [www.SoundingBowls.com](http://www.SoundingBowls.com)

*Tobias Kaye is an Irish born woodturner living in England.  
From his shop in the south west corner of that land he sends his unique Sounding Bowl instruments all across the world.  
Tobias also runs regular course for people who would like to try wood turning  
If you would like details of either contact:  
[Tobias@SoundingBowls.com](mailto:Tobias@SoundingBowls.com)*