

Movement of the Psyche

INDIVIDUATION IN PICTURES



Laura M Browne

Acknowledgements

Dr Margaret O'Connell

Dr. Conall Larkin

Eimear Brennan

Alec Feldman

For my beloved sister Susan

Foreword

Dr. Ivor Browne. FRCPI, FRCPsych., DPM, MSc (Harv).

It is with great sadness that I heard Laura had passed away all too soon. Shortly before her untimely death she wrote and asked me to write a foreword to her extraordinary work "Individuation in Pictures". As her journey in this realm has ended, it must be said that her visionary artwork is a legacy to how art can function as a vehicle of transcendence.

The very act of individuation is the chance to realise the self and also one's connection to the universe, all seen and unseen. There is a sort of unconscious that clearly produces things which are historical and not personal as evidenced by Laura's work, her images were created before she studied Carl Jung and before she discovered that there were similarities in some of what she painted to various mythological entities spanning millennia as Laura outlines in the Preface of her work.

In a similar way, Carl Jung saw that beyond the ego, there was a more real personal self that was unconscious. From there he went on to discern a much wider and more fundamental view of the "self" as universal, taking this concept much further than anyone else has done before or since. In "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious", Jung has this to say:

A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call this the personal unconscious. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the collective unconscious. I have chosen the term 'collective' because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a supra-personal nature which is present in everyone of us... the contents of the personal unconscious are chiefly the feeling-toned complexes, as they are called; they constitute the personal and private side of psychic life. The contents of their collective unconscious, on the other hand, are known as archetypes.

Having identified this archetypal dimension Jung's explorations went further and deeper. The crucial period when this happened was during 1912 - 1913 when his relationship with Freud had effectively ended. But it seems that the termination of their relationship had little to do with what had been taking place inside him at the time.

It was no accident that Jung was led to penetrate deeper into the unconscious. He was always interested in mythology and had assembled a vast library of esoteric literature. After retiring from the Burgholzli in 1909 he set about writing "a study of the transformations and symbols of the libido". This represented for him a return to his true intellectual roots, his preoccupation with cultural and spiritual realities. Later in 1935 he described this in this way: *"it seems to me I was living in an insane asylum of my own making. I went about with all these fantastic figures: centaurs, nymphs, satyrs, gods and goddesses as though they were patients and I was analysing them"*.

In this way; *"Transformations and Symbols of the Libido"* was essentially a study of fantasy thinking, that *"could be taken as myself and that an analysis of it leads inevitably into an analysis of my own unconscious"*. He felt completely lost and as time went on he began to have visions and dreams about vast destruction, floods with thousands dying, a sea of blood covering the northern lands. At first he thought these fantasies applied to him personally and he feared he was going mad, that he was on the way to becoming schizophrenic. Then on June 28th Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated and on August 1st, 1914 war was declared. To his great relief, Jung realised that all he had been experiencing was a precognition of the destruction that was about to overtake Europe and was not something to do with him personally after all.

Many years later in 1957, speaking of this crucial period of his life when he went down for the first time into the recesses of his unconscious mind Jung recalled:

"The period, of which I have spoke to you, when I pursued the inner images were the most important time of my life. Everything else is to be derived from this. It began at the time, and the later details hardly matter anymore. My entire life consisted in elaborating what had burst forth from the unconscious and flooded me like an enigmatic stream and threatened to break me. That was the stuff and material for more than only one life. Everything later was merely the overt classification, the scientific elaboration, and the integration into life. But the numinous beginning which contained everything was then".

In a similar way Laura makes the point that what is happening now is that the unconscious is becoming conscious and I would agree with her that this is what is taking place. I feel we are moving towards a qualitative change, a major transformation in human consciousness, where our awareness of reality will be starkly different. Our understanding of what are now unusual phenomena, only experienced by rare individuals, those with psychic capacity - such as telepathy, genuine mediums, awareness of past lives, near-death experiences and heart centred spiritual awareness, etc., will now become commonplace. Our present dependence on mobile phones, computers and other current technologies will become less as we will be able to communicate much more directly with each other and with those in the reality beyond this world.

Such rare individuals, like Laura with her esoteric paintings, are pointing the way and this is why her work is so important and why now that she is gone from us, it should be published.

It is sad that she will not now be able to continue with her creative explorations as I think her insights were still at an early stage of development and had she lived, there would have been so much more to come.

Preface

My ideas come from myself. They come from my unconscious mind: the part of the mind that reveals itself to us in dreams and sometimes visions. My own belief is that at the present moment the collective unconscious is becoming conscious. I believe this to be a new development and have located three artists in the USA and one in UK who are working along similar lines. I am sure that there are more.

I have spent four years studying the work of the Swiss psychoanalyst and thinker, Carl Jung, and realised that I had been through what Jung describes as “the process of individuation” with the aid of a therapist. This is a psychic process which takes an extended period of time and produces a new orientation of the psyche and what Jung describes as “an ongoing relationship with the unconscious”. He also makes the case that the alchemists of past centuries, while purporting to make gold, were in essence going through this same psychological process of individuation.

In relation to this, I have found similarities between what I’ve painted and various mythological imagery, also parallels with alchemical imagery. For example the painting “Black Goddess” is a rendition in the 21st Century of the Black Goddess who was worshipped in Central Europe 2500 years ago. She was depicted as rising from the sea holding a silver wand. This would concur with Jung’s proposition that the feminine principle is being resurrected by the zeitgeist. I believe from my own experience that the unconscious mind spans millennia.

The painting “Manikin” is also a pure product of the collective unconscious. These small men were put as statuettes in wells and cisterns by the ancient Romans to protect the water supply. The painting “Singing God” is a 21st century rendition of the alchemical figure Mercurius, believed by the alchemists to bring the gifts of the spirit.

I must emphasise that the paintings were done before I discovered these similarities in the course of my reading, so its’ definitely not a question of déjà vu. While some of the work is an expression of the unconscious, other paintings are describing what it feels like to go through individuation. In this I would refer you to the painting “Queen with Raven” and the two paintings “Pool of Transformation”. I find that I am still painting what it feels like to go through individuation.

I draw and paint from life and it informs the imaginative work.



The Swimmer

79 x 65 cm, Oil on canvas

Entering the waters of the unconscious in search of the self.

Water represents the flow of unconscious psychic life.



Sleep of Reason

90 x 120 cm, Oil on canvas

The personality under the influence of the shadow.



The Singing God

66 x 128 cm, Oil on canvas

A 20th century rendition of the alchemical figure Mercurius, whose cornucopia gives forth the gifts of the spirit. His is also the hand that gives and receives.



Manikin

64 x 80 cm, Oil on canvas

Dwarf God found in ancient Roman Wells as a clay statue and accompanied by sea creatures called Neneids.

The appearance of the Cabiri, guides to the unconscious.



Moving Force

90 x 60 cm, Oil on canvas

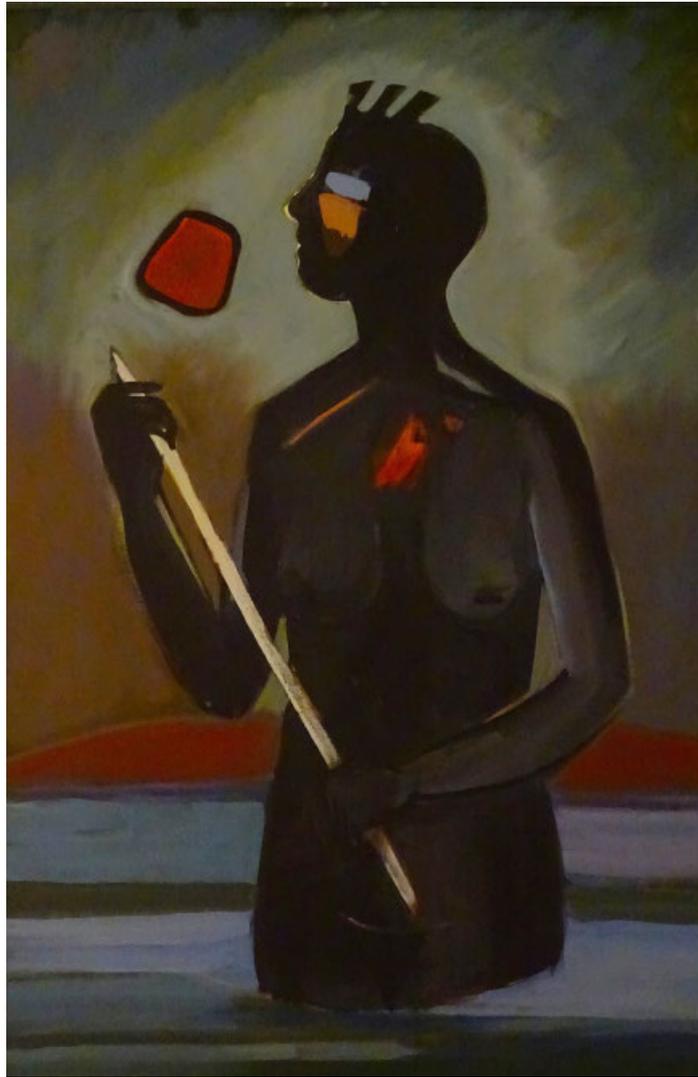
She who brings forth the world spirit.



Queen with Raven

66 x 128 cm, Oil on canvas

The body being transformed with the help of sacred bird.



Black Goddess

67 x 96 cm, Oil on canvas

Worshipped in Central Europe 2,500 years ago, she appeared as a painting from the unconscious, a pure product of the collective unconscious.



Birdwoman with Serpent

66 x 128 cm, Oil on canvas

Release from the influence of the shadow, as depicted by the Serpent.

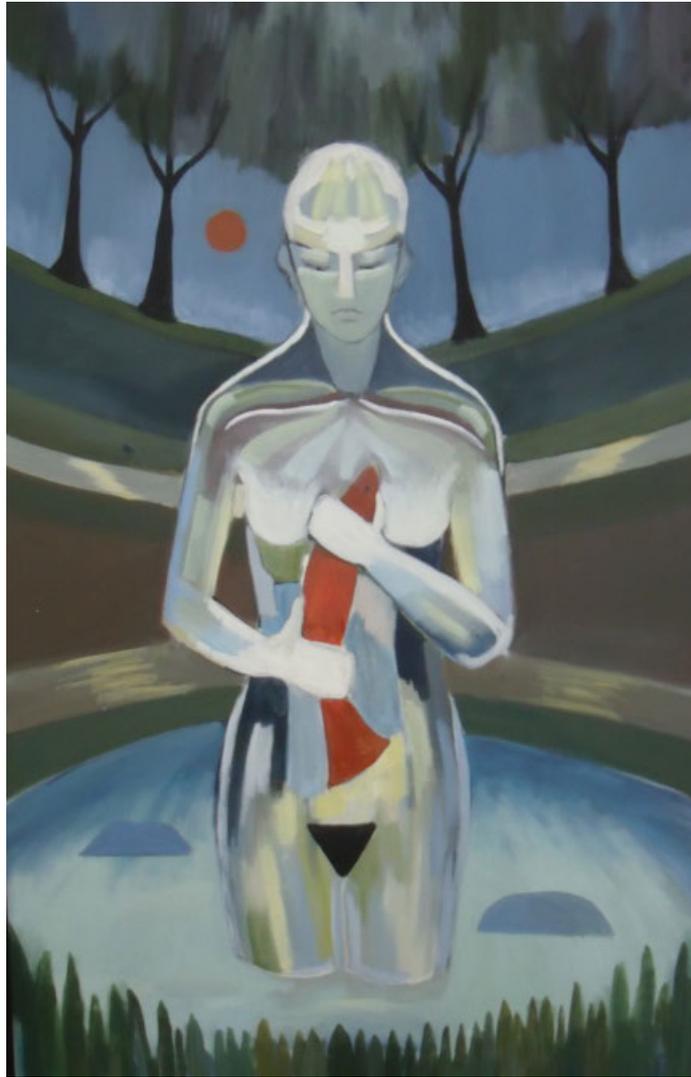
The emerging of the personality.



Pool of Transformation I

76 x 102 cm, Oil on canvas

Body and Spirit being transformed into a new psychic existence.



Pool of Transformation II

76 x 102 cm, Oil on canvas

Body and Spirit being transformed into a new psychic existence.



Finding the Fish

92 x 76 cm, Oil on canvas

Finding the self - as exemplified by the fish - symbol of wholeness.



In the pool with the golden fish

102 x 77 cm, Oil on board

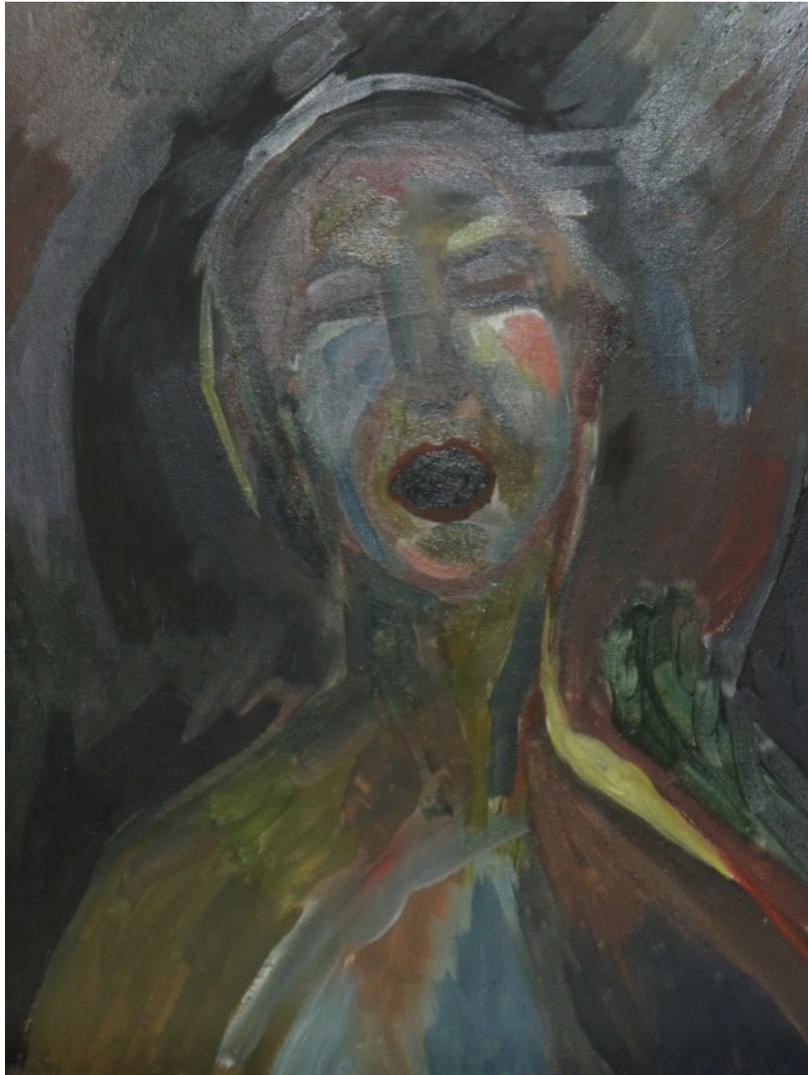
Immersing one in the waters of life with the fish as guide.



Black Traveller

67 x 96 cm, Oil on canvas

Image of the shadow.



Suffering

76 x 100 cm, Oil on board

Pain



Female Crucifixion

50 x 39 cm, Collage/Gouche on paper

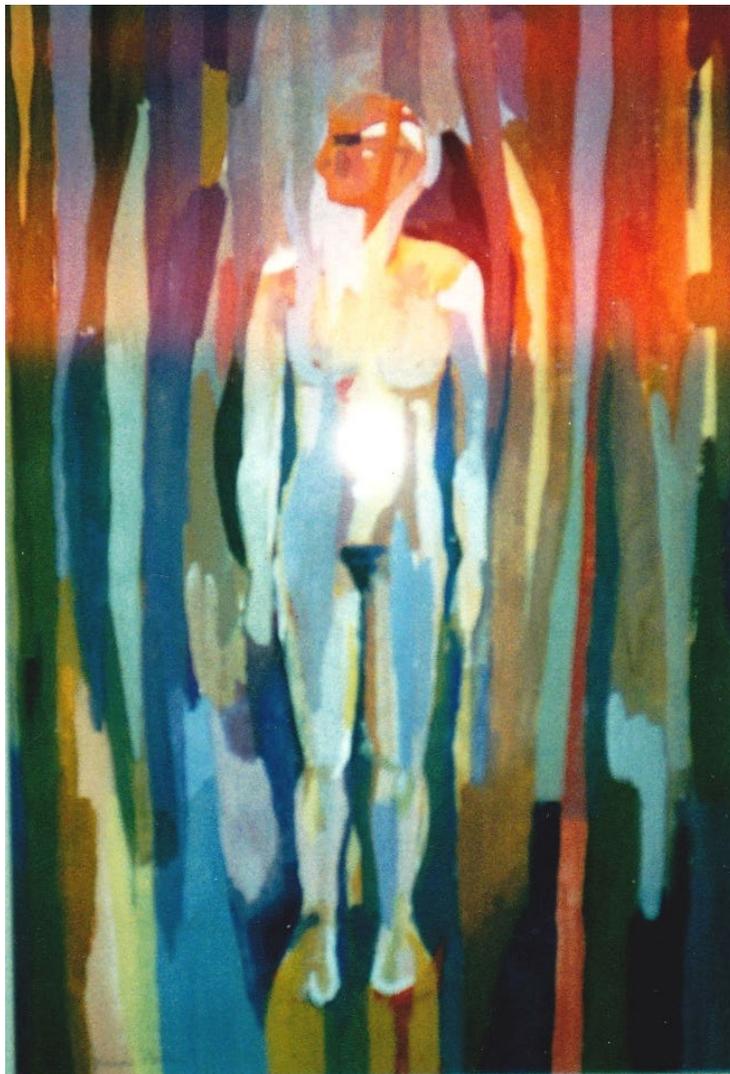
Suspended between the opposites.



Garden of Hope

133 x 109 cm, Oil on Canvas

Reaching the place of peace and illumination.



Emerging Woman

60 x 40 cm, Watercolour

The new personality emerging.



Sacred Stone I

58 x 46 cm, Mixed media on paper

The centering of the personality as depicted by the stone.



Sacred Stone II

58 x 46 cm, Mixed media on paper

The stone is the centre of the personality, in alchemy called the 'Lapiz'.



Totem

58 x 69 cm, Mixed media on card

Image of the forces of the collective as expressed in a totem idea.



Night Voyage

120 x 90 cm, Oil on Canvas

After individuation.



Isles of the Blessed

133 x 109 cm, Oil on Canvas

A happy, nirvana place, with the dove for innocence and gentleness.



Psyche

125 x 95 cm, Screen Print

About the Author



Laura Browne was a qualified artist working in Ireland. For the last 10 years of her life she had been painting full time what it felt like to go through what Carl G. Jung describes as the "Process of Individuation", as well as painting other work from the collective unconscious.

During this time she held 6 solo exhibitions of her work as well as exhibiting in selected group shows, including the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA).

Dr. Ivor Browne opened her final show held in her native town of Wexford, in February 2013.

Laura lived and worked in Limerick city, Ireland. She passed away on 22nd April 2013