

**“Articulating Bodies of Grace”**  
*In-Depth Workshop in Movement, Perception, & Transformation*



THE THREE GRACES  
(DETAIL, FROM PRIMAVERA)  
by  
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UFFIZI GALLERY, FIRENZE

*for all Artists: writers, movers, poets, painters, musicians, archers, scientists and thinkers... facilitated by L. Martina Young, dancer*

**3 Sundays in December: 1 ~ 3 pm**

**1<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY: 7 December 2008:**

**DISCUSSION:**

*Elemental Forces* – gravity (weight), time (duration, pulse, rhythm), **planes** in space (surfaces containing straight lines that interconnect, PLACE[MENT]), and **implacing** oneself in dialogue (the gesture) with these forces (each of which are identified by their imaginal/conceptual terms, “NAMES” for and *evocateurs* of certain experiences. How we engage in, with, and through these forces unleash and connote infinite “expressivities.” As we do, so begins a journeying toward transformative experience (aesthetical). Here lies the sense and suggestion of the meaning of “poetics” – the *movement* of such possible transformative experience.

**Our task:** to cultivate and sensitize the “inner eye, ear, epidermis, tongue” to perceive (sense, feel, listen, smell,prehend) AND BE RESPONSIVE TO (follow) our perceptions (wisps of peripheral presences) with a knowing (compassion and trust) that something of value is hidden yet wanting to come into some view *through us*. In the delineated and contained ground of the “performed space” – writing room and the dark room, music, art, and dance studio, the archery field or the laboratory, a shining something eggs us into a confluence of *being with* (surrendering to, being mounted by, as in Voudun) these expressive forces.

“plane bodies”: Force Fields – surfaces that extend in infinity  
*frontal* (horizontal, flat like a window, bisects body right/left)  
*saggital* (longitudinal, vertical, forward and backward movement)  
*transverse* (diagonal, cross-wise, “the round.”).

Each plane comes with its own expressive qualities (possibilities).

Attuning oneself to a knowledge of the **planes** a body occupies brings awareness to **the nuance and change of “expression”** from one plane to another, i.e. how a conveyed sense of being (gesturing) in a frontal plane is dramatically altered when the same gesture is ‘performed’ (experienced) in the transverse plane.

\* [Physical/bodily example here.]

*in the image:*

“and the Word became Flesh” (John 1:14):

The participants were given ahead of time the word “tender” to contemplate and allow images to come forth. In the workshop, participants presented not whole compositions but rather semi-improvised “acknowledgements” of an image of “tender” that nudged itself into the present moment.

This exercise establishes a *re*-remembering of the body *in* the word: remember – BOTH WORD AND BODY ARE IMAGES that “connote” “point to” “imply” “body forth” OTHER images.

“So God created humankind in His image, in the image of God he created them” (*Genesis* 1:27) All is image desiring to body forth.

Within the context of Depth Psychology, “image” is SOUL (Psyche). As Soul seeks to present itself in the “made” world, it does so through bodies – ‘soul’ seeks ‘BODY’ to BE in the world. Every image is an aspect of soul, and it comes through life’s imagination (imaginal realm) of itself. As artists, and as human beings, we *tend* to be the GROUND for soul’s presence. What shows through is soul’s desire to be seen, heard, acknowledged. All pathologies are images of soul-talk.

**The task:**

1) to educate/cultivate the ability to stay true to the image as it shows itself, whether in movement, sound, language, color, motion, rhythm, energetics, thought, dream – all are “gestures” of the image (psyche, soul) impressing itself upon us;

2) to *re*-implace the body in the word/image and to “discover” what happens, what abides there, and what develops hence.

***The Discovery:***

When we place our bodily selves into the life force of the image, that is, allow the *body of the image* to inhabit us as we *bodily* inhabit the image, the image then MOVES us further into *its* whole story, and reciprocally, our own, in narrative, portrait, song, and gesture. We become moved; something happens, things unfold that could not be predicted or thought ahead of *becoming being the image*.

As each participant bodied forth something of, a wisp of, an impression of “tender,” each was also “made” tender. Each became the *process* by which the word/image was able to make its presence known, and as it offered itself up to be seen, everyone of us, present with this moment of *presencing*, are altered for seeing witnessing being taken by the life force of the image. This is the point of *art*: to BE ALTERED (ALTARED) Here lies the ethical round of being artists – by giving (being) altar *for the image*, everyone present in the place of the performance (book, poem, bull’s eye!) is raised to an altered level of *being*.

When we are able (allow, give time to, cook, give credence to) and wholly follow and inhabit the sensorial content of the image in every moment– in tone, gesture, word, sense or melody – isn’t this the *authentic being* we are after?

**“Here, in this place, we flesh...”** (Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, 88-89)<sup>1</sup>

“[flesh] that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. We flesh. Love it. Love it hard [. . .]. Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face [. . .]. *You* got to love it *you!* [Love] your mouth [. . .]. What you say out of it [. . .], [what] you scream from it [. . .], what you put into it to nourish your body [. . .] *You* got to love it. This is flesh I’m talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved. Feet that need to rest and to dance; backs that need support; shoulders that need arms, strong arms [. . .]. And O my people, [more] than eyes or feet. More than lungs that have yet to draw free air. More than your life-holding womb and your life-giving parts, hear me now, love your heart. For this is the prize.”

### **Commentary from Diane Rugg, Dance Educator and Choreographer:**

*This fall, I initially assisted and then simply witnessed Martina as she set her newest work on a local professional dance company. Using a specific text from her dissertation as inspiration for movement material, language became the entrance into and spoken accompaniment for the finished piece. An improvisational process allowed the dancers to create movement phrases based on the text, "Articulating Bodies." Martina then designed and fully shaped the final form of the dance. She spent a great deal of time in discussion with the dancers about her method and approach for this piece, illuminating the inherent and palpable potential of the words to unearth*

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Jewish Passover *Hagadah*.

*bodily imagery, and how to physically inhabit that imagery in a fundamentally honest and organic way. As if leading an in-depth movement workshop, Martina encouraged each dancer's discovery of how to pare movement down to its essential and elemental core. Through keen observation, dialogue, and experimentation, the hidden depth of the dancers' material was brought to light. While this may sound like a classic Choreography class, there was a profound difference: these professional dancers discovered newly felt ways of "residing in their bodies" and experiencing in real time the demands of their movement choices—ways that were entirely unique and original to each individual body. Martina's method of working seems more akin to the art of alchemy, as she appears guided by some ancient muse driving her toward transformative matter. What resulted was exciting, inspiring, and innovative movement that eloquently complemented and was complemented by the text. I am very familiar with these dancers. Many of them were in my classes and I have worked with this company myself. Yet, I have never seen them move in quite this way. Honest, sophisticated, and subtle art was being created, learned and taught.*

*In another revelatory experience, I attended a creative movement workshop that Martina offered recently. There were four of us in attendance and we ranged from professional educator to professional performer, to student and layperson. The format was simple and straightforward: we were asked ahead of time to consider the word "tender" in all its implications, and to share "what came up." As we worked through showings and discussion, we addressed the essential issue of "image"—its application in the creative process and how it informs what we do as artists. While I have contemplated these questions often and deeply, in this particular instance I found far-reaching and transformational answers. Through Martina's scholarly research and long practice as a working artist, she has discovered and refined a pathway that successfully reveals and elucidates answers to these and other questions at the heart of what Art is, where soul lives, and why we are here, as artists and as human beings. Given the current state of the dance art form and of the world in general, I feel strongly that Dr. Young's approach to the body, movement, and aesthetic experience is one that should be experienced by many more of us.*