

ON SCRIBING

A Social Art of the 21st Century

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INTRODUCTION

Each of our gestures, scribed on a wall or enacted in daily life, matters to the preservation and evolution of our species.

When we see clearly, in an informed open-minded way, we can make choices that involve and positively impact entire systems, small and large alike. That might mean taking five minutes to call a friend to say “Hi...” establishing connection. It might mean taking a stand in your company to reduce polluting the ocean, influencing coral reefs and thus the entire global food chain.

To make positive choices, we must first open our eyes and see.

In 1933, Josef Albers arrived at the Black Mountain College in North Carolina knowing few English words, enough to convey his purpose for teaching: “To open eyes.”¹ In some ways, this book is an homage to Albers, who opened countless eyes through his decades-long exploration with color and his dedication to teaching.

My own inquiry into the relatedness of things began in earnest when reading and applying Albers’s seminal book *Interaction of Color* during a university class called “Color, Form & Space.” Professor Norman Daly challenged us: “Prove color is not independent.” By investigating various hues and values side by side and placed upon one another, my eyes and mind were widely opened by the very same grey appearing purple against yellow, then green against red.

As a painter, I started to attune to the relationships of color and objects everywhere. Beige against indigo: a moth, pinned against a screen, in darkness, seeking light. The inquiry extended to non-material things, too. *Ideas side-by-side... how to represent those juxtapositions? People side-by-side... how to convey the vibrational field?*

Then, in 1995, I met Matt and Gail Taylor and was introduced to scribing as a facilitative role in collaborative processes. In one DesignShop™² – an immersive experience where stakeholders come together to scan information, focus around options, and act on solutions in cycles of rapid iteration and rotating teamwork – every concept, view, hunch was drawn up on rolling dry erase walls and made visible to the whole group.

Through the placement of these large walls side-by-side, each containing unique ideas, suddenly I saw a format that extended my study of color into visual thinking.

I saw a way to represent multiple ideas from multiple people in one place, stimulating group insight. It was like walking into a cathedral full of mosaic, where each piece of colored glass, though unique, loses itself in the vastness of the overall creation. The full array of these dry erase walls seemed like a passage to a new kind of human interaction.

¹ *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College, 1933–1957*, Oct 2015 – Jan 2016 exhibit at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston MA.

² Paul Roberts. “Group Genius”. Fast Company. 1997.

Wait! But what is scribing?!

To scribe is to visually represent ideas while people talk, while people can see the drawing, to establish relation within content that aids with insight and decision-making. It's essentially a language with "tight integration of words and visual elements"³ that facilitates group learning.

Known to have taken root in the Bay Area of California in the early 1970's⁴ – scribing is a practice that makes the unknown manifest through pictures, maps, diagrams, and models. It's a kind of performance art, translating the concepts and energy of gathered individuals onto a wall, while they watch and engage by offering inputs. Whether tracking presentations, meetings, dialogues, or systems – scribing effectively provides guidance.

Scribes serve as artistic aids in human navigation and shared seeing.

Scribes represent information, in as neutral a way as possible, to craft living artifacts. We draw, then document the work digitally, then let go of the tangible pieces by handing off paper and boards to clients, and even wipe down dry erase and chalkboard surfaces immediately after a group stops talking.

The process is fleeting. The final images end up on people's smartphones, in documents, reprinted as posters for conference rooms, in reports, in library displays, and as handouts for those not in the room during the actual making of the piece. But the physical artifact is a mere echo of the primary value, which is in-the-moment collective sourcing and reflection.

Scribing is an inherently participatory art form.

Historically, two-dimensional art making has been a private, sheltered creative act. Scribing, though, is an exposed, witnessed, feedback-dependent activity. It gives shape to conditions in an organic way, in rhythm with what is wanting to be voiced and seen.

I listen. I draw. You see. You speak. I listen I draw you see you speak. You see I listen you speak I draw. You speak I draw we see we listen. (That's how it feels.) It's fluid.

Scribing is brought to life, by and for, the social field in which it's created.

Wassily Kandinsky viewed art as a liberating device, bringing the inner life alive through pure line, shape, and color.⁵ Going beyond an abstract 2-dimensional plane and with increased freeing potential, scribing activates the social field, the unseen territory of human interaction.

When I work at a wall with a participant audience at my back, the engagement is with both their content and energy. By generating an immediately visible reference point, the content and energy are fueled within a new reflective context.

Robert E. Horn. "Visual Language and Converging Technologies in the Next 10-15 Years (and Beyond)" 2001.

David Sibbet. "A Graphic Facilitation Retrospective" 2001.

Wassily Kandinsky. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art (The Art of Spiritual Harmony)*. 1914, Dover Publications, 1977.

A reinforcing loop occurs between what is offered through the words and the images, thus expands the container for interaction and insight – and, through synthesized imagery, can reconnect people with a sense of wholeness.

This art is of the whole.

It only has life because a communal desire to make sense exists. Someone, or a team, has decided to bring in a scribe to help people see what it is they are talking about.

What comes to form through the hand of the scribe is what's meant to come through, no more no less. What lands on a surface – no matter how thought through – is as far as a system can go at a given time. It reflects a slice of time.

Sailors cut through fog at the speed they hear the gonging buoys. Chiropractors adjust a neck within the limits of the vertebral mobility. We can only move as fast as conditions allow, within a range of readiness; scribes track that movement.

Scribing is a visual practice unique in our age, a distinct art form of the 21st century, functioning in the moment, across boundaries, and as a social seeing device.

Because of its interactive and co-creative nature, scribing presents a way for a body of people to arrive at collective awareness. It offers a return to a sacred way of being together, where our spirit of humanity rises over any individual agenda. The assemblage of the parts – like colors, like mosaic tiles, like walls hosting ideas side-by-side, like bodies in a room talking and listening – transcends the current known reality.

Of course this is an aspirational view, and it's not meant in any way to undervalue the approach of using graphics to mirror group content in a literal or metaphoric way. There is great value in having a tree drawn as the word tree is spoken; this lands the territory in a clear and precise way for people.

My view is intended as an additional approach in the practice, one that can bridge the current popular styles of graphic recording and facilitation to a practice with potentially deeper and wider social impact.

Society is in desperate need of seeing.

I write this book only to aid in that advance. We are a species edging towards extinction if we do not address our behaviors to turn around global trends – including climate warming, inequality, and perpetuated violence, among others.

Maybe this kind of urgency for survival has been felt perennially throughout history, during other cycles of destruction/contraction that humankind has faced (i.e.; the Bubonic Plague, the Holocaust...)⁶ But certainly this is a unique time in history if we do not together address our human and planet-destructive actions.

With the aid of seeing, we can more clearly choose and chart our trajectory. Our views become shared, solvable in a very different manner than if we exist within individual bubbles of perspective.

⁶ Tobias Stone. "History tells us what may happen next with Brexit & Trump" 2016.

It is a time to orient with a long view. It is a time to touch the positive potential in ourselves and those around us, without apology, with determination.

It is a time, with open eyes, to see clearly and act.

Today's great challenges call us to (re)arrange our interior dimensions to more adequately meet current, outer realities.

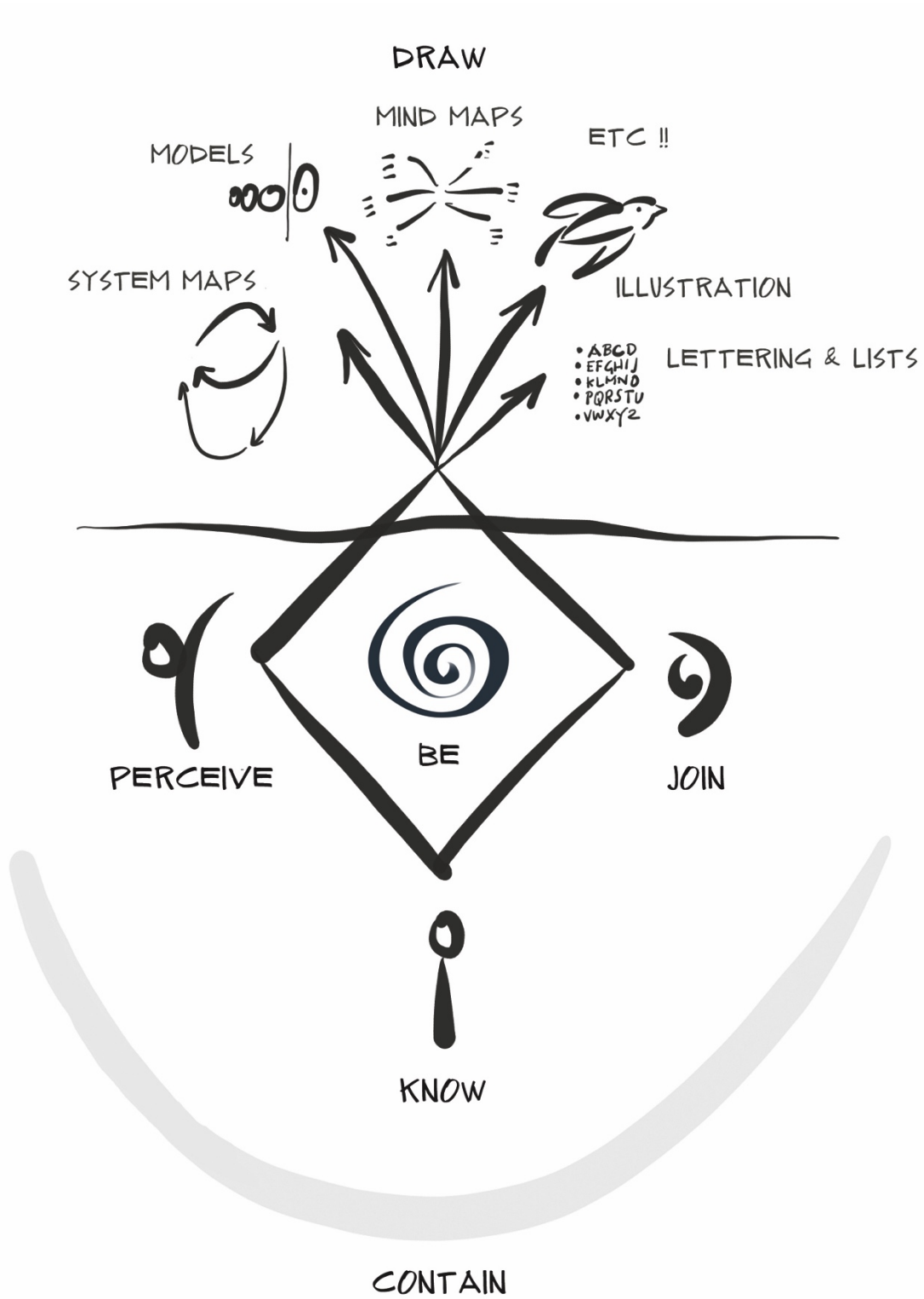
Working from the inside out, then, by unpacking my own experience from the past 30 or so years, I serve up visual practice as one lens to aid with this larger shift.

I write for those who seek to see with fresh eyes.

This book is definitely aimed at the development of current and future scribes, to expand the possibility and impact of what we do.

It is for a broader audience, too, for those whose "pens" take shape as kitchen utensils, gardening rakes, community leagues, city planning, national policy-making – you name it.

It's a book for anyone who cares about how we exist together as humans, for anyone wanting to explore their interior functioning, who seeks to approach the world anew.



A MODEL OF PRACTICE

As we approach an action, we prepare. A cake does not go in the oven before all the ingredients are combined, as a scribe does not draw before she has processed what is being said.

It's a swift processing that stays in motion, within neighboring cycles, until the very last word in a room is spoken. The multiple tracks of preparation happen as if we are making a cake *and* cookies *and* muffins in rapid sequence.

This Model of Practice addresses the internal coordination required to process multiple inputs and draw in a real-time manner, attending inward and outward in any one moment.

The model has formed over numerous attempts, over 20 years of experience, to explain graphic facilitation.

One answer to that question is: "We draw while people talk." And in that "while" are active components of this framework: domains of Being, Joining, Perceiving, Knowing, and Drawing – held within something called a Container, where trust breeds confidence – informed by the Social Field and Source.

I'll describe three primary influences that inform my practice in the coming pages:

- **The Diamond**, to support practice
- **The Iceberg**, to enhance perspective
- **Presencing**, to place oneself with emerging possibility

This model is not meant to discourage the strength of the hand and the value of the production of illustrious graphics. That aspect is critical and is, after all, what is ultimately communicated and seen by a participant-audience.

Rather, this thinking is meant as a foundation for the scribe who is wanting to learn and expand their practice, to be able to articulate aspects of what we do, for themselves and for others.

With this framework in mind, we can manage our own balance of domains and development – while at a wall processing vast amounts of information, and in between sessions as we reflect and renew.

Additionally, for non-scribes, what you read on the coming pages can inform any design or facilitative act. I propose that all practices calling for thoughtful intentionality can be enriched by this guide.

THE DIAMOND

The diamond is the main structure of the Model of Practice (and this book.) Numerous researchers and practitioners in fields of human and organizational development have used this shape to anchor behaviors “in time”.⁷ I’ve learned these over a 20-year span in a variety of contexts, and am repeatedly surprised at the depth of practice the framework offers.

The key takeaway here is to seek BALANCE – to bring in what is missing between the quadrants.

The origin of this diamond framework tracks back to Chris Argyris and Don Schön who presented “advocacy” and “inquiry” as primary axes that manifest in conversation.

These are two stances I have found to underpin everything a scribe hears. Either people are advocating – stating a view, staking a claim, or they are inquiring – asking a genuine question, one to which there is not an immediate answer. An entire wall of drawing can be built on these positions alone.

In facilitating conversation, we want to be able to ride on either axis. If many voices are stating their points of view, we want to be skilled enough to invite in other perspectives. If a group is wandering in circles, we want to be confident enough to make a suggestion in one direction.

This applies to scribing, too. If I notice the axis is tilted, and know the group seeks to have healthy conversation, I will draw up what is missing to prompt balance.

If many voices are stating their points of view (“I suggest...” “That’s not going to work...”) we might write them all out in equal measure – OR – we can listen closely for the few questions being raised (“I wonder if...” “Have we considered...”) and emphasize those into the wall, choosing to balance out the advocacy by visually enhancing the inquiry.

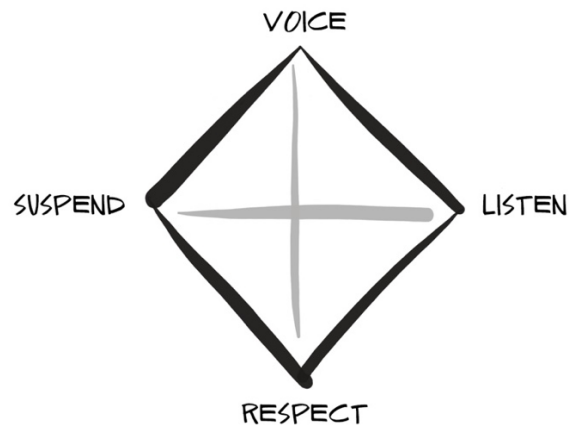
Likewise, if a group is wandering in circles (“I’m not sure...” “This doesn’t make sense...”, we can track the flow, albeit circular – OR – we can limit the tracking of questions and listen for the few voices that propose solution and make sure those are boldly noted (“Let’s try...”)

William Isaacs, a pioneer in the field of dialogue, built on Advocacy and Inquiry with the following Practices of Dialogue:

- **Voice:** Reveal what is true for you, regardless of other influences
- **Listen:** Attend to the words and the silence between the words
- **Respect:** See others as legitimate
- **Suspend:** Loosen our grip and gaining perspective⁸

Behaviors “in time” include a set of actions within a bound parameter, such as during a presentation or conversation. This differs from behaviors “over time”, which represent changing conditions and outcomes, as would be expected in longer periods of activity like with a cohort of a year-long learning process. One is a more fixed model; the other, more dynamic (see Fritz *Creative Tension*, page xx, as an example)

Clarify the source from Bill if book or LCI

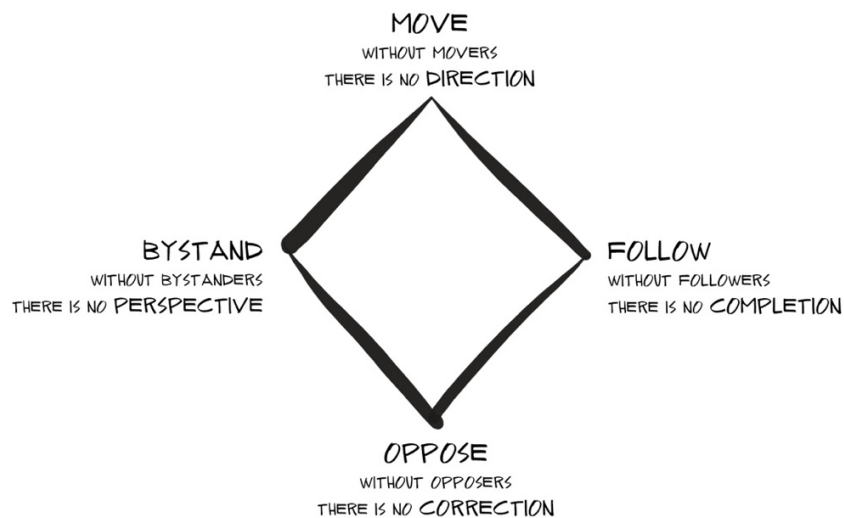


These practices were conceived for people in dialogue, and they are directly applicable to scribing, too. If we can begin to understand where people are coming from *when* they talk, that influences our understanding and representation of what they are saying.

Someone who is actively Suspending, for example, saying something like, “Do we have numbers to back up these claims?” indicates that there might be a whole area not yet covered in the conversation that begs for exploration, and therefore real estate and placement on the wall.

Likewise, if we hear something like, “I don’t agree with you, but I’m willing to give your idea a try...” that is a sign of Respect, and possible closure of a topic. It might be a good time to draw a boundary, a line, around a group of words and images and get ready for the next flow of information.

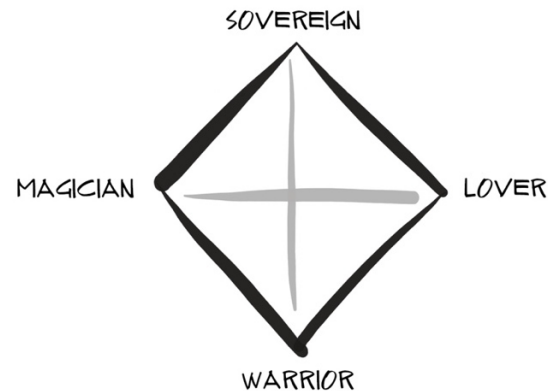
Systems psychologist David Kantor’s research in family dynamics also maps on the diamond, presenting the extremely useful **Four Players in Conversation**.



Adapted from David Kantor © 1995

Again, no “role” exists without the others, and a healthy system represents all positions activated.

Cliff Barry and Mary Ellen Blanford, co-founders of ShadowWork®, expand a diamond that addresses personal development through understanding leadership archetypes, based on the work of Carl Jung.⁹



This is an extremely subtle application, where ... emotional gateways (as begin each section of this book) access the various energies:

- Sadness opens the Lover
- Fear opens the Magician
- Anger opens the Warrior
- Joy opens the Sovereign

In practice, if I feel my heart overwhelmingly “on line”, if I am I pick up on sadness, it often indicates the Lover’s longing for connection in the room. I might address this by drawing in a more fluid manner, making sure to connect ideas, bringing in a quality of heart through the drawing.

When I sense that there is a lot of apprehension or confusion in the room – the gateway of fear – I will try to draw in a way that identifies patterns, that is more clear about facts, and that presents specific options. I increase the Magician.

If there seems to be a lot of anger in the room, I will take that as a sign that Warrior energy is high, therefore I will make sure to note focus and decisions. People are generally angry because they care strongly about something and are ready to take a stand. To focus on the energy ends up doing a disservice to what is actually wanting to come through (if I can figure it out beneath the often oppositional tone) which is the true cause.

⁹ Learned in application through Barbara Cecil, Glennifer Gillespie, and Beth Jandernoa - of the Circle of Seven, through their Coming Into Your Own program for women <http://www.ciyowomensretreat.com>

And when there's a lot of joy in the room, that indicates the Sovereign energy of blessing, direction, and initiative. I will make certain to draw concise next steps, in order to set the group up for thoughtful action.

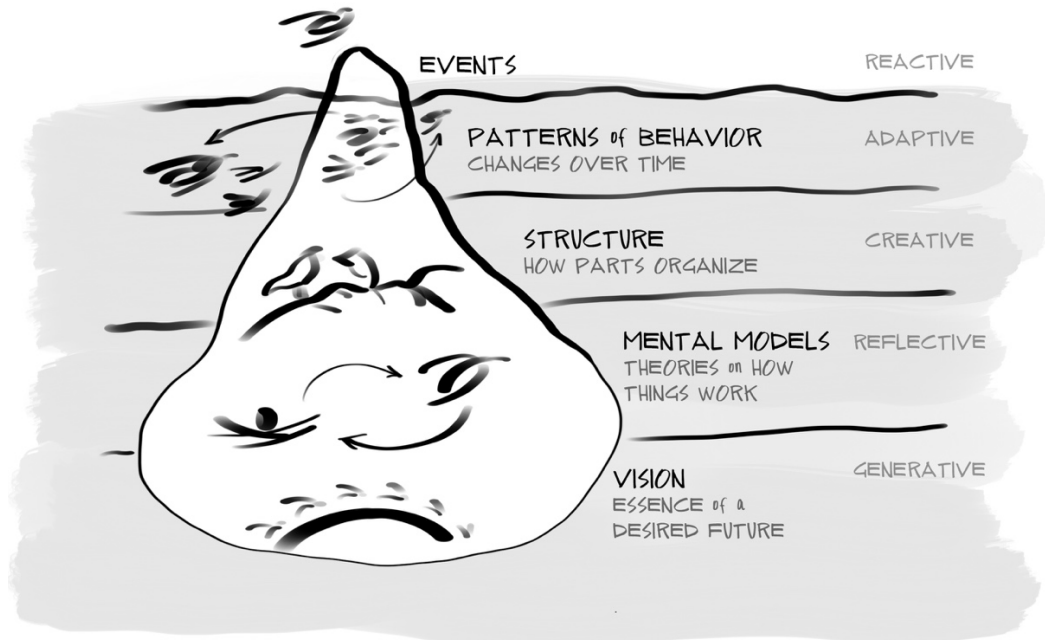
This is incredibly invisible work for a scribe, and I often wonder if anyone in a room even knows it's happening. But I am often aspiring to consciously balance the wall with the energy in the room, and considering that one impacts and reflects on the other.

(Summarize in a key point)

All of these influences underpin my interpretation of the diamond model. I have tried to synthesize and simplify the various terminology by using the words Join, Know, Perceive, Draw, and Be – at the center – in order to get to the essence of the domain energies in the application to visual practice.

Again, all aspects of the diamond are needed for complete practice. We are each strong in some and weak in others. That is part of our learning path and personal development.

THE ICEBERG



Overlaying the diamond, I place the Iceberg - a model first presented by Ed Schein and most attributed to Peter Senge through his book *The Fifth Discipline*, further developed with ongoing work at MIT in System Dynamics.

The 10% above the water line – the part we see – represents events and action. In scribing, this is the visible part of our work, the actual drawing.

The premise of this entire book is that the 90% below the water line is as, or even more, important to cultivate than what comes through the marker alone.

Diving into the iceberg... below the water line we find: Patterns of Behavior, Systemic Structures, Mental Models, and (for some, but not as universally included) Vision. This correlates with action modes that are adaptive, creative, reflective, and generative.¹⁰ Leverage increases the deeper down the iceberg we go.

By seeking to understand the different levels of the framework within any one situation or dynamic, we see and can represent an expanded picture of reality.

To diagnose a room and reveal where sense-making of the spoken word is most needed, we can refer to these tiers to surface leverage points where the system – and the scribe – can place attention to facilitate

¹⁰ Daniel Kim, *It Begins Here: Organizational Learning Journey Toolkit*, Cobee Publishing House 2009.

desired outcomes.

My very first step when working with an organization – of ANY scale – is to figure out where the person, panel, team, or whole group is coming from, what they are aiming to achieve, and how I might intentionally scribe to facilitate within their comfort zone and also stretch it, if possible/helpful.

Usually I go one tier deeper. If a group is functioning at a behavioral level, for example, I will scribe to try to reveal the structures underpinning those behaviors. If that expands the boundaries of the conversation, I will then tune into the mental models in play, moving down the iceberg to create results we want all to see.

Here is a breakdown of the model, as applied specifically to visual practice:

Events are like data, actual occurrences that we see, above the metaphoric waterline, like noticing a lone bird flying. In the spoken word, I think of events as individual notes – words or phrases, single statements, stand-alone ideas, comments, parts. These combine to tell stories and can be most readily represented.

Patterns of behavior convey parts moving within structures. A flock is a formation based on a need, for example, to migrate with weather. We can look for flock-like behavior in patterns of speech too. This occurs when one idea or person follow another. For example, in a talk on sustainability, Professor John Sterman said: “We live on 1 planet Earth, but our footprint on average is 1.5.” And then: “This will lead to turmoil and chaos, and eventually human migration.”

The words come out with causal relation, and one concept *fits* with another to form a gesture or new shape of its own, only a pattern because of grouping.

Structure shows how pieces of the picture form and relate; Every part of the picture holds together in a natural coherence. Connections surface across gaps, and it’s our place to organize them into an order that we perceive.

We don’t look for one bird; we look for two, for three, four, forty birds and then inquire into what holds them together. Are they a couple? Siblings? Friends? Of different flocks? Adversaries? Do they face each other, turn away? Join? Avoid? Does one communicate to another bird on another branch? In another tree? What are the conditions of the tree? Protected? Exposed?

All these aspects are components of the structure *inside* a story, dialogue, conference theme, multi-year project. Every piece has context. I try to find it and draw what is relevant to surface the inherent structure, or relationship of the parts, that wants to be revealed.

Mental Models is the domain of thinking and beliefs, “deeply held theories about how the world works” – Daniel Kim. This might be a subtler territory, not at all explicit, where non-verbal listening is required to understand where people are coming from.

In the iceberg drawing on the previous page, I drew an egg and a bird to represent the age-old question of “Which comes first?” that challenges our idea of where life begins.

This territory is delicate; the beliefs are in the room and they are in us. As scribes, we are there to help represent the room, and resist layering in our own theories. That said, it is possible to help reveal biases in

order to activate reflection, and, perhaps, shift mindsets.

Vision is the deeper territory of aspiration, hope, calling, that which can set the tone for all else pushing upward through the iceberg. I see this less as a space for targeted vision, where an aim might be set to be reached, and more as a domain of possibility. A scribe can sense into this, and then hold in spirit (even without drawing!) to really join the system as its future self, and share the intent for the vision to come to form through the thinking and action of the people.

PRESENCING

I consider Presencing as: *being with*. It is our place at the center of the diamond, and can infuse all parts of our practice.

It can be experienced in a moment of time, and over time, depending on our ability to sustain a connection to our purest and most authentic Self.

The social technology of Presencing is a way of being and is foundational to a generative scribing practice.

Presencing¹¹ is acting in the moment, as called for by an emerging, unfolding reality.

As Otto describes it in his book Theory U:

“The word Presencing means to sense, tune in, and act from one’s highest future potential—the future that depends on us to bring it into being. Presencing blends the words ‘presence’ and ‘sensing’ and works through ‘seeing from our deepest source.’

It involves a conversation between two selves – one of our past, and the other of our future – that surfaces and guides our highest future possibility.”

Another colleague, Marian Goodman, described Presencing once as “holding compassion for consciousness as it tries to find its bearings,” which very much resonates with my personal experience.

Weaving Presencing into scribing leads me to pause before drawing, to expand my attention to someone’s voice, the space around it, the system, the social field. In the moment before lifting a pen, I imagine the extended range of connection between people in and out of the room, the meaning of the session in their culture, the context of their work in the larger context of society.

Through the lens of Presencing, as scribes, we can represent the moment of emergence, of some new possibility coming to light.

When “Presencing,” I listen to my most in-tune self for guidance. I engage all of my senses to discern when to move and when to be still, when to start and when to stop. This can be with drawing, making a comment, offering a hug, joining and leaving a group, with partnership, with any kind of life decision.

Today, scribing is an individual two-dimensional art form (technology will undoubtedly shift this in the coming decades) and a scribe can access Presencing in themselves, individually.

But if the room is not aware of shifts in consciousness – the scribe can only go so far with their own process; a limit in collective awareness limits the depth of the manifestation.

¹¹ Something on the history of how Presencing came to be

Likewise, the deeper the understanding of Presencing, the richer the container, and the more qualitatively robust the drawing that comes on line.

(insert Example? Berlin Master Class? Conversation on Holocaust?)

In moments of shared Presencing, I've experienced an extreme harmony in the air – everything falling into place – and my drawing naturally mirrors that cohesion. The feeling of Presencing in action? A supremely creative, suspended space where everything is a yes.

To be clear, Presencing is not about projecting some sort of ideal state. Rather, (my interpretation) it is about tuning into an already organized perceived whole and, from that place, revealing the parts necessary to engage forward movement.

CONTAINERS

Around the Diamond, the Iceberg, and Presencing, supporting these states of being and diagnostic methods, is something I've already referred to in this book as containers – holding spaces for places, people, and states of the heart.

The weakness or strength of a container determines the likelihood for successful or destructive conversation, for loving or detrimental relations, for productive or destructive environments, for well or ill-being.

In a way, like ice forms from and melts back into the ocean, containers give energetic ground for life and death, for growth and decay. We serve as containers for others, and they for us. The stronger a container, the stronger the trust, the stronger the safety, the more that can be nourished, tended, grown, realized.

To get a feel for this... As my grandmother (Margaret Bird) was aging, at a point when she could really only go outside with a walker and physical assistance, I recall visits where we would lunch at a local NYC diner. She would ask me things about my life, about school, about my friends, about my studies, and she would marvel at the complexity of the world in which I lived. (This was 1984, so we can only imagine what she would say about our world today!)

What I recall most poignantly is the way she would pay attention, seeming to hang on every word, and the way she made me feel safe, and loved, loved no matter what I would say, no matter what I had to share. I never felt judged. No matter what she thought about the details of my escapades, she would listen closely, look me in the eye, and continue to pursue an understanding of my life.

She provided a container, a space where I could see myself more clearly and grow as direct result of how she was holding me.

When groups heat and fracture, our containers need to strengthen, so that we can better support what is wanting to come to light. Other times the container in the room is so strong that we might be enveloped in its power, and therefore our ability to show up increases because the room is holding us, in a way, as my grandmother held me so well, years ago.

When my grandmother, somewhat hard of hearing and surely with many of her own personal concerns, was completely able to show up for me, I was completely able to show up for her. I could be more vulnerable, because I felt safe. She brought out the purest part of me by how gracefully she held me in her own heart.

Love, as a base note, is the ore, and order, of the container.

It is simply this: How we hold each other in our hearts, that is the container, that is what we can offer to each other, across any boundary.

FIELD

Finding a way into Field *

Field can refer to a physical place, like a piece of land that holds a crop. And field can refer to an area of interest. Field, in a social context, also refers to a body of people and their interaction.

Field can even extend to the concept of “interbeing” – a term defined by Thich Nhat Hanh to convey the interconnectedness of all things:

*“If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist.”*¹²

With the notion of field in mind, we can consider the web of relation from which, into which, and for which we draw.

My grandfather (Junius Bird) was an archaeologist in Central and South America from the 1930’s to 1970’s, discovering textiles that defined the existence of pre-ceramic cultures. Old BC times he touched, with a curiosity-defining approach.

What if the art of scribing serves as a field gesture far forward, as a weaving of sorts, created of the social field for the future social field, producing artifact aimed towards cultural insight?

Wassily Kandinsky largely defined the role of abstract art in the 20th century by writing: *“The work of art mirrors itself upon the surface of our consciousness.”*¹³

I’d propose that this is the century in which artists consciously extend “to field,” representing not only the planes of human interaction, but also seeking to give language to an intangible – yet perceived – dimension around and between seemingly disparate parts (of species, of the planet.)

As scribes, we can seek beyond the form that represents inner life or literally spoken word. With this stance, the resulting form is not an imposition on a surface, something separate from its ground, but rather something inherent that arises from a surface and from the field. Fields, therefore, inform form.

One day, musing on the visual representation of fields, I started remembering previous depictions: crosshatched marks, flecks, washes of color. Then, my mind wandered away from the language of it back to an experience of it, an *evocation*...

A summer’s day with family in Bearsville, NY... fresh corn... a small flagstone patio adjacent to a wild meadow... milkweed in bloom, teased by light... lit... let... let to be of nature... let to be free.

¹² Thich Nhat Hanh, *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism*, Parallax Press, 1987.

¹³ *Point and Line to Plane*, Dover Publications, 1979, originally published in 1926. To note, from Museum of Modern Art website: “For Kandinsky, abstraction was a weapon for transforming what he perceived to be a corrupt, materialist society.” Thus by representing consciousness through a pure color-coded geometry, he attempts to bring forward the essential human spirit that can transcend man-induced current conditions.

From a child's memory of complete oneness with people and the earth, with care for the development of the profession of visual practice, with concern for our social relations and behaviors on a heating planet, and aware of the recursion between these various interpretations of field, I write.

* This broader expanse around and within us, *this* is the place from which to draw.

SOURCE

Source. Life force. Aliveness.

Around us, in us, a well-spring of energy to tap into at any moment.

Palpable when we feel our own heartbeat, and when we have our head close to someone's chest and can hear theirs.

A current felt between people, living things, objects, in nature. A vibrational space of charge. We know it when we look in someone's eyes – sincerely see into – where all appearance fades and we meet the truth of that person, no matter how well we know them.

Maybe it's in the cry of an infant at birth. Maybe it's the last gasp, the "death rattle" we hear when someone passes. It's surely in the wind, waves, flame, and rock.

Sometimes source rages and is loud and all around us, like thunder in a summer heat storm. Sometimes it's a buzzing unavoidable frenzy of flies. Sometimes it's in dandelion spores floating across an empty city lot or swirling on the surface of a puddle.

Accessing source while drawing, the mind hangs in a suspended float, alert and patient for specific gesture, interior stillness in the midst of outer churning.

I often pause – sometimes for a few minutes even – before drawing. People have asked me about this "waiting". It's part to clear the mind, and yes, part to sense into source.

Accessing source while drawing, what is meant to reveal in the present moment becomes perfectly clear.

By attending to source, the essence of what is wanting to be seen makes itself known, and drawing shifts from a quick repetition of marks made *onto*, to a series of fluid marks extracted *through*. The scribe, pen, surface, words, people, room, moment – *one*.

Source is a self-sustained, inextinguishable resource. We need only quiet, open, and breathe to engage in its current, to infuse our own process of joining.

We ride with it, in it, for a spell.

And source lives on.