**A Reflective Activity**

**for viewing abstract art by John Freeman**

The following activity is designed for use with John Freeman’s abstract art and in particular his “Inner Journey” series of work. However, it is offered as a contribution as just one way in which we might engage with art and develop an awareness for how art activates diverse responses within us that can help us to make meaning of our lives and experiences. It is simply a guide and may hopefully stimulate other creative ways for others of engaging with art.

NB: To make the most of the reflective process, you will need tools (of your preference) to record your experience such as; a journal and pen, or paper and pencils or a capacity to audio record on your phone.

Before you begin: On arrival at the gallery, take a few moments to walk through the larger gallery space absorbing the colours, displays and diversity of items in the physical space. Notice the broad range of artists and items on show, notice the ceilings and walls, the floors and signs that go together to create the environment you are in.

To create the optimal ambience for contemplation It important that there is silence or appropriate meditative music played at a low volume. It is also worthwhile running a 10-15 minute guided meditation before commencement. A time of simply prayer based on your own faith tradition can also be good preparation.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

1. As you enter the doorway to the exhibition, slow your pace and . . . .

Breathe in for 2/3 steps

Breathe out for 3/4 steps walking slowing along with your breath until you are standing in the space surrounded by the works of ‘The Inner Journey’.

NOTICE: The artist describes these works in the following way (read slowly in your mind). . . . .

*"Unique patterns symbolise the events we have experienced, the seasons we pass through, the roles we play and the layers of our lives. Each element plays a role in the overall landscape, just as each experience we have impacts our lives and how we see the world. The completed image is a rich and colourful tapestry, speaking of the complexity, diversity, and beauty of our own unique human experience, and perhaps the Divine, imbued in all of life.*

*Within all of my paintings there is an image of a bird which symbolizes the Divine. It is not always easy to see and blends into the overall tapestry, just as the Divine is veiled and obscured within our own lives.”*

1. Start with one painting and slowly walk around the room observing and exploring each work. Move in so you are close, and then move away to expand your view of each piece.

NOTICE: What are you seeing? What are you thinking? What do you feel as you walk around?

*Record this in some way (write, draw, audio record….)*

1. Of all the paintings which one are you drawn back to? Go and stand before it

Stand still

Refocus on your breathing

And re-engage with this present moment

Allow your eyes to trace the

. . Lines

. . Colours

. . Textures

Linger on them and the locations of intersect, interplay and integration

NOTICE: How might the lines or themes running through this painting reflect your own journey? What colours are there? What might they represent? Imagine this painting as a mirror of your life – what is reflected? What can you see?

*Record this in some way (write, draw, audio record….)*

1. Look again at the painting - is there a part of the painting that you want to capture? Where is it? Take a photograph of this section of the painting on your phone.

NOTICE: What is reflected there for you? Is it something about your own life, your inner world or life story? Describe what you have captured and why.

*Record this in some way (write, draw, audio record….)*

1. Go back and stand in front of one of the paintings. You are going to complete the exercise by doing another walk around the room using a slow pace and breathing, like you did on entering the exhibition space.

Slow your walking pace and breathe in for 2/3 steps

Breathe out for 3/4 walking slowing along with your breath until you have completed a circle of the room.

You can now leave the space in your own time.

Here are some further questions which may also be used in the activity:-

What painting are you attracted to? Is it obvious why or are you unaware at this stage?

Observe your engagement with the painting. Does your eye come to rest on a focal point for you? Or does it wonder over a number of areas?

Does any element jump out? (Elements being line, shape, colour or pattern)

Can you identify any subtle feeling you may experience?

Is there anything from your experience or memory that connects you to something?

Optional extras:

* Meet with others and after doing the reflective activity, have coffee and share your experience

Here are some questions which may be discussed in a group:-

Here are some questions used to facilitate group discussion.

1. How would you describe your experience of engaging with the guided reflection?
2. What Did you enjoy the most?
3. What would you want to say to the artist?
4. Is there anything you would change about the process?

* Contact the artist and share your experience with him @ <https://www.johnfreemanart.com/get-in-touch.html>

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Please note: Should you have a strong emotional response to this activity, you are encouraged to speak with a trusted person to make sense of your experience and support your emotional and mental safety.***