

Notes on “Alchemy” 2009 and 2021



*We are being lived by powers we pretend
to understand* W. H. Auden

Many things I like about Alchemy

I like the way the word sounds: the sound of the in-breath (*Al*) and out breath (*Ka-Mi*). *Try it.*

Al-Kemi it means maybe or maybe *black dirt* or maybe both

The Technical, The Spiritual and The Intuitive: It's a real fusion of head, heart and hand. It brings together thinking, feeling and doing as equal partners.

The alchemist is always a part of the experiment. S/he is the alembic in which transformation is happening

It's a nice blend of right brain and left brain activity. Sometimes we need logic and clarity and the explicit; other times only the intuitive, the mysterious and only the implicit will do.

It's not dogmatic. There is not just one way or even one goal. Even "The "philosophers stone" is really...

There are 12 major processes and over a hundred other alchemical processes. Do you know how many and variations there are?

Bletting, Calcination, Ceration, Cohobation, Congelation, Corporification, Digestion, Dissolution, Distillation, Fermentation,

Filtration, Fixation, Multiplication, Projection Putrefaction, Putrefying bacteria, Solution, Sublimation, Unity of opposites

Alchemy is the knowledge and experience of the mixing of matter and spirit. Contemporary alchemical process might include such familiar processes as: *glimpsing, nuance, flicker, accident, the ambiguous, the indistinct, the fleeting, glances, sighs, coincidences, bibliomancy.*

Alchemy welcomes affinities. It works with materials or qualities which seem opposed to each other. Really, they are just related to each other. There are many many many of them

As above, so below. That's a fragment from an old document. It means that there are always two levels on which transformation is happening So you can ask: *What Else is going on here?*

The alchemists "laboratory" was a labor + oratory-- place to labor- do work, to pray (orate). Some images also include musical instruments, implying a place to

play. I like that. It reminds me of many artists' studios and good children's play areas.

It understands **Time** in an old way. Time is not linear; it's circular or a spiral. The word is "**Kairos**"

Some things can be discovered; some things come to reveal themselves and other things stay a mystery.

Alchemists had the best job description: "priest-scientist-magician" or a sacred intuitive technician

Alchemy make no distinction between organic and inorganic matter ; all matter is sacred and alive. It was a form of practical animism, precursing the Biophilia Hypothesis and Gaia

Alchemy is hopeful. I like that. I like to know things can change; things always change; everybody, everything transforms.

A powerful alchemical metaphor is ***the matrix or the web***: All things are interconnected and the subtlety and complexity of interaction is profound.

Alchemy is about ***turbulence***.

Alchemy is about colors. shapes. Images

We *need* expressions of

affinities, things, tendencies, realities that seem to go together and, from some points of view, seem like opposites. Somehow we thrive on that tension. We need ***BOTH***; just one is an imbalance. Here's a never-ending list of such sweet pairings:

*We have the need to move and to rest.
We have the need to expend, expand and
then restore, repair, heal
to look back and inwards to the past and
then to the future.
to leave, and to return
to merge, and to separate
to lose control, to gain control
to hide, and to be found
to be private, and then public
to create and build, and to dissemble and
destroy
to be expelled and to be welcomed back
to experience the permanent, and then the
temporary
to enjoy both the familiar and the new
to search for origins and then deny them*

There are not **direct** connections between these pairings. They are related, they are paired by a spiraling, a tacking, affiliation. The ability to endure these affinities is both innate and practiced. **Object-making is a good way to do this. Try making things which hold affinities:**

stillness and movement
lightness and darkness
enclosure and vastness
crafted/manipulated and natural/found

the god and the beast?
the profane and the sacred?
danger and enchantment?
sin and innocence?
the ordinary and the fabulous?
the Hunter and the Protector?
the indistinct: the bird/branch, the snake/stick,
the fern/insect?

Consider an object to be both:

<i>civil and feral</i>	<i>bought and stolen</i>
<i>given and taken</i>	<i>known and unknown</i>
<i>found and lost</i>	<i>given and gotten</i>
<i>solid and porous</i>	<i>connecting and isolating</i>
<i>poisonous and nourishing</i>	<i>smooth and rough</i>

Have you experienced the
loving Mother? needy Mother?
devouring Mother? indifferent Mother?

The Father: *patriarch? sacred monster?*
lowason'isaw, the cunt-craving coyote?
spiritus rector?