In This Issue

Natural or Performed? – A Tightrope Walk
by Charlotte Selver
This article is based on an excerpt from the newly published audio tape of Charlotte Selver’s August 3, 2001 class on Monhegan Island, Maine.

When we are on the way to going deeper, deeper than we have been going, we meet many obstacles. Many of us let the obstacles defeat our going deeper.

We lose interest. We get discouraged.

The experience of awakening is not always agreeable.

When one feels more, one feels more in all ways.

One cannot choose what one feels.

So that it could be that we became much more conscious of certain things that we have till now simply swallowed, or shut off.

For such recognition we should be very grateful, because then something new can start.

From the new Journal “Every Moment is a Moment”. (see left panel)

It is very interesting to find out how life is when we are more spontaneous, and when we don’t embellish anything. What happens when we don’t repeat ourselves and say “this is right and this is wrong”, but simply feel in the course of momentary living? At first we may notice that even when we don’t try to be good, even when we just let things have their own way, that we still have this tendency to perform. Could we gradually give this up and let the true person come out? Can we feel what is really, honestly, happening?

It is very helpful not to judge, just to allow, feel, and see what effect something has. This is true not just in class, but in everything we do. Whether you are with your friends or enemies, or at your job, it is very important to begin to discriminate between that which comes naturally and that which is performed and then to choose what comes naturally.

It is important, however, that we don’t watch from our heads but that we feel throughout. We have feeling nerves everywhere but very many of us watch mostly from our heads. I wish we could gradually become conscious of it and trust our ability to sense from head to toe.

(continued on page 5)

The Natural Language of Drawing and Color
Excerpts from Connie Smith Siegel’s forthcoming book.

“The ability to produce rich and vital lines in drawing is as accessible as the capacity to become aware of breathing.” These words came from an article in the 1973 Sensory Awareness bulletin, describing my first experimental work in drawing and sensing with members of the first long-term study group with Charlotte. At the group’s request I had left my structured university approach for a more experimental way of working. Instead of drawing exercises, we noticed the subtle sensations inherent in the drawing process itself: the touch of the paper, changes in breathing as we picked up a crayon,
and the tactile sensation of the crayon meeting the paper. Each sensation left distinctive marks on the paper, unique to each person.

The wealth of expression in these drawing experiments revolutionized my teaching, and eventually led to my forthcoming book, *The Natural Language of Drawing and Color*, which integrates my university teaching with Sensory Awareness. The first pages presented here (2, 3) describe the basic process, beginning with inner sensation, that originally evolved from the study group. The next spread of two pages (4, 5), from the chapter “Drawing the World”, moves into representation, showing how our inner state of being determines what we see in the world and how we express it. From the sense of movement, this chapter goes on to explore touching, weight and space, and the effect of these sensations on seeing and drawing. The drawings influenced by the sense of weight (page 6), especially, demonstrate an important principle expressed by Charles Brooks in his book, *Sensory Awareness*, “What we must yield to, when we are borne upward involuntarily against the pull of earth, is the spontaneous generation of energy in our own organism.” We can see that drawing is not only a matter of capturing a likeness of a subject, but a vital exchange of energy in which we can be regenerated by what we see and feel.

The last chapter, *Art as a Healing Force*, describes a three part process called “Self Guidance in Drawing and Color”, which uses of the basic sensing and drawing process to address life issues. By combining color, drawing, movement and writing to evoke and balance elemental forces in relation to pain or distress, this work parallels the ceremonies of native shaman/healers. The process, described on page 7, creates an opportunity for each person to become their own shaman – to express their pain or discomfort, and to witness their own balancing powers and inner wisdom in response. We can see Pat’s contracted sense of despair about a job (ill. 56) expressed in drawing, words and movement, shift by itself toward a more expansive, lighter state of being (ill. 57, 60). Like our experiments in sensing, there was no demand for this positive shift – it happened by itself. I have seen parallel transformations while working with other issues, from loss to trauma to illness. Although every situation is unique, we can see universal archetypes emerge, affirming a sense of order within ourselves, and in the world. Offering the Self Guidance process in the context of the peace and environmental movement has been especially inspiring to me as I witnessed the fire and darkness often evoked by conflict and war spontaneously balanced in the second drawing by the lighter elements of water, light and air. These two polarities are often integrated in the third drawing. Through the elemental language of drawing and color, we can see that peace is not just a concept, but an entirely natural state of being, a dynamic equilibrium, intensely creative. Through these explorations I have found that the language of drawing and color, along with the other expressive arts: music, dance, drama, are a natural extension of our practice of Sensory Awareness. As we become aware of the present moment through our senses, we come home to the center of being – to the vitality and wholeness inherent in our issues. The explorations in drawing and color have given me an opportunity to witness and document the restorative possibilities of our work in sensing, an opportunity to reaffirm the words of Charlotte that have inspired us so many years, “There is no right or wrong, just sensations which come to consciousness and from which we can learn”.

21. Regina Kraus, different stages of the first drawing, charcoal. 21a. 21b.

Let the drawing evolve from your contact with the paper, moving in any direction. When the drawing is complete, you could continue with a series, each drawing evolving from the one before.
Drawing as Exploring

Experiment: You can give the event of touching the paper with crayon the same kind of attention you give as you wait for the first contact of wheels on the runway after a long flight on a jet plane. That moment of meeting the earth can be so poignant, so welcome.

Keeping your eyes closed, let the touch of the crayon lead the way across the surface of the paper, moving in any direction, at any pace that feels right.

There is no right way to touch the paper; there is only the reality of the moment. It is just exploration, nothing more, and there is nothing you can do wrong.

When the movement of drawing comes to an end, you might wait in stillness for a while, as there may be echoes of the experience left inside you.

After the Drawing

Experiment: If the first drawing feels complete, you could leave it as a record of your first immediate impulse and take some time to see what happened.

Or you could begin another drawing, letting it evolve in the same manner as the first, eventually creating a series of three or more, each drawing changing according to our experience of the moment (21, 22, 23).

Another option is to work further with the original drawing, using it as a launching pad for additional explorations of shape, color, and even images (24-26).

As you work on the drawing with eyes open, it is important to maintain a sense of trust, following whatever impulse seems right, watching the simple drawing grow and develop in new ways. You can make no mistakes, as there are no rules in improvisation – only allowing what comes next.

When I have something to express,
I have done it without thinking
of the past or future.

Pablo Picasso

We can watch the original drawing grow and develop in new ways, trusting its evolution.

In improvisation we are all equal. Whether drawing for the very first time or beginning a painting at the end of a long artistic career, we are all beginners when we make the first mark, as we can see in the photograph of Picasso (27). We are stepping into the unknown, trusting each impulse, moment by moment. Picasso was remarkably gifted, but perhaps his greatest gift was his sense of adventure and his enduring confidence in his own feelings and visions. As we develop our own confidence through these simple experiments, drawing becomes an adventure even when we move into the challenges of representation.
Discovering Yourself in the World

Experiment: In this experiment you can find your own subjects to draw, either in your work area or outside. To remain centered as you meet the wide range of forms in the world, take the time to experience your state of being before you begin, exploring the drawing paper with your hands. Then draw with crayon or charcoal, trusting the path the crayon is making on the paper. When the drawing process feels complete, move with your drawing, noticing where you experience it inside.

After this preliminary sensing drawing, take some time to simply see what is around. Do you notice anything that attracts your attention? If you are outside, it could be a clump of grass under your feet, a nearby rock or a tree, or a distant hill. Does anything call you in the world? When something comes to your attention, take the time to feel it inside. After moving with your subject, draw it with eyes closed, directly from this inner feeling. Then move again with what you have chosen and draw your subject with eyes open. Can you still let your sense of movement guide the drawing?

As you look at your drawings after this experiment, you may find a similarity between the elemental quality of movement in your first sensing drawing and the forms you drew in your environment. We can see this inner connection in Linda’s work. Coming from a sense of breathing, her airy strokes (15), led her to tree limbs, meeting the sky (16). In contrast, Beatrice’s sense of weight led her to the earthy solidity of a rock (17, 18). When approached as self-discovery, drawing what you feel and see in the world can become an inner adventure – a joyful reunion with your own life force.

The sensation of breathing (15) leads the artist to draw the spacious limbs of a tree (16).

The sense of weight expressed in the sensing drawing leads the artist to draw a granite rock.
Movement: A Source of Personal Style

Our inner forces not only determine how we see and draw the world around us, they provide the foundation of personal style and expressive power. This expression of life forces in a work creates a tangible presence that can elicit an almost involuntary gasp of appreciation from people. The painter Emil Nolde speaks of this quality in a picture as “the successful audacity of its form.” We can see this presence in Lye’s drawings, as she moves between abstraction and representation, always influenced by the vitality of her own movement.

I love the act of [drawing] spontaneously. Starting with something and not knowing where it is going to end up.

Lynelle

I’m enjoying exploring what charcoal can do: what happens with the mark on the paper, with an eraser, with rhythms, the placement of light and dark.

Lynelle

The distinctive rhythms in Lye’s sensing drawing (19) are reflected in the dynamic forms of a bull and later in the portrait study.

Natural or Performed... (continued)

If you were a tight rope walker high up on a suspended rope, how much sensitivity would you need for the next step forward, the next step backward?

 Usually, we swallow our sensations as though they are not existing. And yet there is this possibility to sense — as you know, the whole work we are doing is called sensory awareness, awareness of the senses. That doesn’t mean that the mind tells the senses, “Be good,” but the senses, in themselves, are able to feel and discriminate. It is very interesting to realize that we can notice even the slightest lack of air in a room. When we notice that, we open a window. Who knows what I mean? In the same way, when we notice that there is not enough sensitivity in ourselves, we open our inner windows, so that we feel more.

This possibility to feel more can be exceedingly helpful to us, because then we can feel what feels good to us, what we are afraid of, what we withdraw from, where we hold back, where we give ourselves fully. This can be a great teacher in life and I would suggest that you find out about it. For instance, when you go away from here, from the school house, every stone on the road can tell you a story. It’s very nice to walk on the stones and to let them help you to wake up. And you would hopefully not complain and wonder: “Why is this road not smooth and even? Why is the road not parquet?” No, it is as it is! And you respond to it, and hopefully your response is spontaneous rather than directed.

Even if you do the greatest nonsense spontaneously, it’s much better than directing yourself. But the important thing is to find the middle way: to be personal, spontaneous, and at the same time not oppressive. It would be very beautiful to be awake enough – not watching, but being there – for what you notice of yourself and of the other, and then to respond from that experience.
The Regenerative Power of Weight

As well as composition, weight can generate energy. As you experiment with weight, you may experience a remarkable phenomenon — when the pull toward earth is fully experienced, it can wake up the opposite force. The deeper the pull, the more forceful and exuberant is the urge to rise. Out of the dense earth, the dark womb, comes the regenerative impulse to life. There is no need to produce this effect or even expect it. It will happen by itself, as you give yourself permission to follow the influence of gravity wherever it leads.

The conscious alignment with gravity is at the heart of creativity and the process of healing, as well. Always conscious of gravity in her teaching, Charlotte Selver maintains that it corrected the collapsing of her spine that occurred in her nineties.

Knowing down, we know up.
Knowing up, we freely stand.
Charles Brooks
Sensory Awareness

New Audio Tape

We are very pleased to announce a new audio tape with a class by Charlotte Selver.

NATURAL OR PERFORMED? -- A TIGHTROPE WALK
Monhegan, August 3, 2001

For the complete list of our publications see pages 8 and 9

SAF Newsletter 2007-2
New Books in German
Elsa Gindler – von ihrem Leben und Wirken
>Wahrnehmen, was wir empfinden<, Christians Verlag
Newsletter 2007-2g 2002

Auf dem roten Teppich / Erinnerungen and Frieda Goralewski
Goralewski-Gesellschaft. e.V., c/o Quest, Hertastr. 20, D-14193 Berlin

SAF Newsletter 2007-2
Entfaltung statt Erziehung / Die Pädagogik Heinrich Jacobys
Walter Biedermann, Arbor Verlag 2003
Exploring through Movement

We experimented extensively with movement in Chapter Three, as a way to appreciate and understand our abstract work. After reviewing these experiments we will now work with movement as an important vehicle for inner transformation.

We can see this transformation in the work of Pat Maloney, as he explores a common dilemma: the demands of his job versus his inner need for freedom and creative expression. The intensity of these demands are expressed in the contracted form, resembling a decayed tooth, in Pat’s first drawing (56). This form initiated more expansive lines, growing lighter, flying off the page (60). Evolving in a parallel way, his movement made his feelings more tangible and facilitated a change from despair to liberation and peace.

The changes can be seen in the colors, as well. Echoing the Itten contrasts, they move from the stark gray shape (light/dark, 55), to confident fire energy (hue, 58), and finally into the quiet serenity of his creative work (simultaneous, 61). Coming from this perspective, it became clear to him that he had to leave his job, and within a few months he did. Having the courage to accept his discomfort and frustration led to a renewal of energy, a reminder of his creative forces. Movement, along with drawing and color, not only made the original feelings more tangible but opened up the possibility of change. The spontaneous writing clarified the problem and expressed the spirit of freedom suggested by the movement, drawing, and colors.

Evolving in a parallel way to the drawings, Pat’s movement shifted from his original contracted sense of isolation and pain to an increasing openness and freedom. The light lines in the last drawing and the colors and writing reflect the quiet serenity of Pat’s own artwork.
SAF President’s Letter

Dear friends of the Sensory Awareness Foundation,

I just returned from the SAF Conference: “Sensory Awareness, Exploring the Roots of Peace,” which took place on May 8th and 9th in San Francisco. About forty people, many of them leaders and long-time students of Charlotte Selver, gathered to explore together what the practice of Sensory Awareness has to offer in today’s conflicted world.

We met at a time when many of us feel very discouraged and helpless in the face of the current state of the world and the United States’ role in it. This conference was not a place for political debate but for explorations into the dynamics of conflict and peace, in the “tangible reality of our own sensations,” as we find ourselves living with other humans – and non-humans – from moment, to moment, to moment.

Because this newsletter needs to go to the press right away, there is no time for a report on the conference this time, but we hope to report more on it in our fall newsletter. I did want to mention the conference, however, because it was a very encouraging event not just in terms of its theme, but for the future of Sensory Awareness as a practice for people in today’s world. I believe many of the participants share this impression with me.

The conference was the first time since Charlotte Selver’s death that a large group of her students – and some new students – came together to study. Most of us left the conference greatly inspired and with a renewed sense for the value of this practice.

I strongly believe that the practice of Sensory Awareness will be kept alive through Charlotte Selver’s many students. But I also know that it will take much dedication and energy from many people working together to ensure that Sensory Awareness can benefit more than just the handful of people who happen to stumble upon this practice. I believe that we can promote this work to a wider circle of interested people without “selling out.” This may be the most important task at hand for the Foundation and it’s members. It is the purpose of the Sensory Awareness Foundation, to ensure the future of Sensory Awareness. For this we need your help! Please support our efforts with your generous donation to the SAF. Become a member of the foundation and/or support our efforts by purchasing our publications – for example the new Journal Every Moment is a Moment (see front page).

Thank you very much for your support and for cultivating Sensory Awareness!

Sincerely,

Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt

SAF Newsletter

Editing & Design: Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt
Send your comments to: St. Laeng-Gilliatt, PO Box 701, Tesuque, NM 87574; email: stelaeng@comcast.net
The deadline for the next newsletter is September 30, 2004. © 2004 Sensory Awareness Foundation 955 Vernal Ave., Mill Valley, CA 94941

SAF Publications

1) A TASTE OF SENSORY AWARENESS, By Charlotte Selver. An overview of the work, with an edited transcript of a session from the 1987 NY Open Center workshop. 38 pages.

5) ELSA GINDLER, Vol. 1. Memorial to the originator of the work we know as Sensory Awareness. Excerpts from Gindler’s letters, an article by her, and reports from her students; including Ch. Selver. 44 pages, photos (1978). *

6) ELSA GINDLER, Vol. 2. Memories from Gindler students and an article about Heinrich Jacoby, innovative educator and colleague of Gindler. 44 pages, photos. *

8) ELFRIEDE HENGSTENBERG. This issue embraces her own studies with Gindler and Jacoby, her work with children, and biographical notes. She was closely involved with Emmi Pikler’s discoveries. 46 pages, with photos.

9) HEINRICH JACOBY. The Work and influence of Gindler’s longtime collaborator, summaries of his books, interviews with his students, including his editor and colleague Sophie Ludwig. 46 pages with photos.

10) EMMI PIKLER. Dr. Emmi Pikler, Hungarian pediatrician, whose revolutionary practice and philosophy about earliest childhood upbringing has been very influential in Europe. Contains extensive selections from Dr. Pikler’s first book, Peaceful Babies - Contented Mothers, and a paper by Judith Falk, M.D., then director of the Emmi Pikler Methodological Institute.
for Residential Nurseries. 48 pages, with many photos of young children.

11) CHARLOTTE SELVER, Vol. 1. Sensory Awareness And Our Attitude Toward Life. Collected lectures and texts. Containing: Sensory Awareness and Our Attitude Toward Life; Sensory Awareness & Total Functioning; Report on Work in Sensory Awareness & Total Functioning; To See Without Eyes...; On Breathing; On Being in Touch With Oneself.

12) New! EVERY MOMENT IS A MOMENT. A Journal with Words of Charlotte Selver from her 102 years of living and over 75 years of offering the work of Sensory Awareness. (125 pages, with many color and black-and-white pictures.)

* available in German translation.

Audio Tapes from Workshops with Charlotte Selver

T6TR EXPLORING THE STRUCTURE OF THE HEAD. Leaders Study Group 1990, class 7-3-90 p.m.
T7TR BECOMING READY - BEING TUNED IN. Leaders Study Group 1990, class 7-19-90
T8TR FINDING MOVEMENT THAT IS TRUE. Green Gulch Study Group 1993, class 4-1-93.
T9TR LEARNING TO RECEIVE. Monhegan Island, 7-30-92.
T10TR LEARNING THROUGH SENSING. Green Gulch, 11-14-77.
T11TR FREEING THE EYES - BEING OPEN FOR SEEING. Green Gulch Study Group 1993, class 3-31-93
T12TR WAKING UP - BECOMING RESPONS-ABLE. Green Gulch Study Group 1998, class 5-2-88
T13TR PERMITTING INNER ACTIVITIES. Monhegan Island, 7-31-80.
T14TR BREATHING AND FULL REACTIVITY. Monhegan, 7-28-92
T15TR EXPLORATIONS ON SITTING. Green Gulch, 2-27-00
T16TR CHARLOTTE SELVER TALKS ABOUT HER EARLY LIFE AND STUDY. Green Gulch, 12-5-99.
T17 ALAN WATTS ON THE WORK OF CHARLOTTE SELVER, GREEN GULCH 12-4-99TR
T18TR HIP JOINTS AND LEGS. Santa Barbara, 4-1-00
T19TR COMING BACK TO EXPERIENCING, Santa Barbara, 4-2-00
T20TR BREATHING AND THE DIAPHRAGM. Study Period, Green Gulch, 5-12-00
T21TR GIVING UP DOING, Barra de Navidad, Mexico, 1-19-01
T22TR BEING FULLY PRESENT. Monhegan, 8-16-01
T23TR ARE YOU TUNED IN? Monhegan, 8-6-01
T24TR BREATH AND HEARTBEAT, Monhegan, 8-13-01

New Tape

T25TR NATURAL OR PERFORMED? -- A TIGHTROPE WALK
Monhegan, 8-3-01

Tapes in German

G1TR VOM NACKEN ZUM GANZEN MENSCHEN, St. Ulrich, 10.4.01
TR TRANSCRIPTS. TR indicates that a transcript for this tape is available for an additional $5.

Check our web site for a complete list of publications.

Each tape is of an actual class in the Sensory Awareness Work, and is intended for people wishing to experiment along with the work as it unfolds during the class.

For faster mail service to Europe for the above publications, and/or for a list of German publications related to Sensory Awareness, (including several translations of SAF publications), write to:

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9 Heinrich Jacoby: $12
10 Emmi Pikler: $12
11 Charlotte Selver Vol 1: $12
12 Every Moment is a Moment: $22

Individual Tapes are $14 each; Transcripts are $5 each.
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