

3rd Annual Multifaith Arts Festival

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Reflections on Love and Marriage through Jewish, Christian and Muslim eyes.

2 - 20 September 2006

at Leo Baeck Arts Centre

The Multifaith Arts Festival aims to build the bridges of friendship and understanding amongst the peoples of the three Abrahamic faiths: Jews, Muslims and Christians.

The Postcard Project

Quotations about love and marriage from each of the three Abrahamic Faiths were provided as starting points for all the artists.

The artists met to show their initial responses to the texts. From that dialogue ensued the artists shared and learned a bit about each others backgrounds. Then they went home to respond to the other artists works and shared information.

This cycle recurred up to three times.

By the conclusion of the process, about 90 original artworks in a whole variety of forms and media had been created.

Artists

Felicity Doherty
Mayadda Hussain

Rachel Johnson
Nikki Green

Robert Hoskin
Gay Clarke

Original texts

Reflections on Jewish Marriage:

From the Song of Songs (8:6)

'Set me as a seal upon your heart'

From Joel 2:16

'Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her pavilion'

From Hosea 2:19

'I will betroth you to me in righteousness'

From the Zohar:

'When a soul is sent down from heaven, it is a combined male and female soul. The male part enters a baby boy and the female part enters a baby girl. If they are worthy, God causes them to re-unite in marriage, and this is the truest mating.'

From Erich Fromm:

'To love somebody is not just a strong feeling – it is a decision, it is a judgment, it is a promise. If love were only a feeling, there would be no basis for the promise to love each other forever. A feeling comes and it may go. How can I judge that it will stay forever, when my act does not involve judgment and decision?'

From the Marriage Service:

'Give these companions in love great happiness, the happiness of Your creatures in Eden long ago. We praise You, Eternal God, who brings the bridegroom and the bride to rejoice.'

Reflections on Christian Marriage:

(This declaration is general: it refers to the Church's understanding of all marriage.)

Declaration of the purpose of Marriage:

'Marriage is a gift of God and a means of grace. In the lifelong union of marriage we can know the joy of God, in whose image we are made, male and female.

Marriage is founded in God's loving nature, and in the covenant of love made with us in Christ. Husband and wife, in giving themselves to each other in love, reflect the love of Christ for his Church.

In Christian marriage, wife and husband are called to live together faithfully, and to love each other with respect, tenderness and delight. The companionship and comfort of marriage enables the full expression of physical love between husband and wife.

They share the life of a home and may be entrusted with the gift and care of children. They help shape a society in which human dignity and happiness may flourish and abound.

Marriage is a way of life that all people should honour; it is not to be entered into lightly or selfishly, but responsibly and in the love of God.'

Reflection on Muslim marriage

Quotations from the Quran concerning marriage:

Ar-Rum 21 (from the Quran)

'And one of His Signs is that He created spouses for you from amongst yourselves that you may find tranquility within them and He has placed love and mercy between you. Verily in this are signs for people who reflect.'

An-Nisaa 19 (from the Quran)

'And live with them (your spouse) in kindness, for if you take a dislike to them, it may well be that you dislike something that Allah has put a great deal of good into.'

(Saying of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh)

'The most complete of the believers in faith are the best of them in moral excellence. And the best of you are the best of you to their wives.'

(Saying of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh)

'Women are the twin half of men.'

Please Note: If postcards are not sold in cycle set, as presented, they may become available for purchase individually.

If so, they may be bought separately, unframed and unmounted for \$100

FELICITY DOHERTY Cycle 1 - In response to the texts

Water colour on paper
Framed and mounted \$580

Beginning Of our world ...Big bang ...Universe begins with a spark, flame, catalyst. Embryonic ... amoebic early life Nucleus ... potential for all life ... perfection. Romance / **Kiss** gentle lips ... tender hold ... delicacy ... balance incredible magic passion ...freedom... flight butterfly wings ...no boundaries. Streams of consciousness flowing in and out.

Promise / Trust Gentle lips on faces prayer hands blessing formalisation hands. Stained glass Church window ... chalice hands ... aim is **Realisation** ... spiritual happiness.

Effort/ work Feet represent work. A dancer's feet. Entwined feet are intimacy and warmth. Feet putting down roots. A plantation of apple trees, a garden of Eden or the tribe and our ancestry.

Realisation The Chalice of hands. All the stages to go through to reach the beginning of the next cycle. The stronger helps the weaker – parent to child or partner to partner.

RACHEL JOHNSON Cycle 2 - Response to Felicity's first cycle

Hand painted on silk
Framed and mounted \$580

Hearts Initial Kiss
Increasing passion
Intimacy
Harmonious blending

Mayadda Hussein – Cycle 2

Works on paper
Framed and mounted \$470

FELICITY DOHERTY 5 - Mandala

(on canvas 30 x 40 cm) \$320

the seal ... forming a nest ... appearance of four white doves protecting the egg ... doves protected by four starfish interlocking ... peace for all religions, all philosophies ... four stars, escorting on the journey a family of four.

FELICITY DOHERTY – 6 Dance of Life

(on canvas 40 x 40 cm) \$350

Circular passage back to beginning ... space with original shape ... dancers passion with promise remembered.

FELICITY DOHERTY - 7 Expression of Joy

(on canvas 60 x 60cm) \$425

EDEN SERIES

RACHEL JOHNSON Cycle 1 - In response to the texts

Garden of Eden

water colour on paper Framed and mounted

\$580

Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden with all phases of life; hope of spring, fruitfulness of summer, the harvest of autumn and the time of reflection in winter which leads to fertility of spring.

The Yin Yang symbol divided by the flowing snake was suggested by A saying of the Prophet Muhammad and from the Zohar:

"And live with them (your spouse) in kindness, for if you take a dislike to them, it may well be that you dislike something that Allah has put a great deal of good into." An-Nisaa 19 (from the Quran)

In a negative there is a positive lesson.

The snake encircling the tree is not meant as an ominous sign. The snake is a reminder to be conscious that the physical world gives us spiritual lessons. Discomfort can indicate we need to change ourselves, learn this lesson and move forward.

ROBERT HOSKIN Cycle 2 – Reflections following conversation with Rachel and Felicity & viewing their work

From the Zohar

Acrylic paint with cotton gauze and shellac on cardboard

Framed and mounted \$580

The one soul, in two discreet entities, plunges from heaven as two stars dropping to earth. (I have also been aware of the aboriginal understanding of birth as a soul dropping into the waters of the "Ungud-snake".)

The two "souls" are carried down their respective streams of life and meet. In Jewish marriage one or both of the partners are ritually purified in the running water.

The souls are united as one in a Garden of Eden experience. The butterfly is part of the garden as a symbol of transformation and new life.

The cup is drunk in the Jewish wedding then broken under the material. One of the meanings of this event is that the pieces can never be put back as before. In my reflection, the stars are fragmented and a new unity created.

RACHEL JOHNSON Cycle 4 - Pomegranate Dreaming

Framed and mounted \$725

Pomegranates, round with many seeds, represent both community and diversity of individuals in community. In Christianity pomegranates represent eternal life; spiritual fertility and the church; and in Hebrew tradition, renewal; fruitfulness. A flowing stream represents the flow of life. Water is considered essential to the life force of fertility and creativity.

The tree and song bird
Detail of Pomegranates on the tree

A fallen Pomegranate nestles in grass as snake leaves the scene.
Song bird drops the pomegranate
Pomegranate floats down river

WATER SERIES

ROBERT HOSKIN Cycle 1 - In response to the texts
Reflections on Christian Marriage

Acrylic paint with cotton gauze and shellac on cardboard
Framed and mounted \$580

The Kiss: The couple enter the boat (symbolic of marriage) that which will take them through the journey of life together.

Becalmed on a sea of love: The honeymoon may be long or short

Narrow Straights: The couple experience turbulent seas and narrow straights. The Christ light leads them through the rocky impasse.

The longer journey: The couple patch up the boat and release old baggage.

RACHEL JOHNSON - Cycle 3 - In response to Robert's first cycle
Life's journey flows

Hand painted on silk - Framed and mounted \$580

Parallel hills and flowing water
Blending into one hill on the horizon and streams of water mixing and mingling
Lightening, Angry skies, jagged dangerous mountains, choppy dangerous water
Calm after the storm – wide open bay of water, hills back into harmony and the sun shining as the tiny boat focuses on eternity.

FELICITY DOHERTY - Cycle 3 In response to Rachel's water series

Framed and mounted \$580

Passage through emotion Silkiness ... weaving of body of water aerial map ... leaves of tree ... date palm ... bird shapes.

Shapes Disconnecting Birds become stars as disharmony develops ... water becomes body of swimmer ... ripples agitate water ... graph lines disturbed ... stars obscuring lines ... whorls like finger prints suggest identity.

Elements of Resolution Backdrop to disharmony ... infinity symbol ... snow capped Mountain denotes challenge.

Harmony in Sight Setting sun ... snow on mountain melts ... swimmer brings water to parched salt pan ... calm hills ... identities flow together smoothly ... connected.

ROMANCE SERIES

Mayadda Hussein's Cycle 1 - In response to the texts

Works on paper
Framed and mounted \$470

FELICITY DOHERTY Cycle 2 - In response to Mayadda's work

Framed and mounted \$580

Beginning – Yellow gold of sun and sand; prayer rugs folding together – Mahgrebi Arabic Script ... elegant, beautiful, with gold leaf like sand – sun – romance. A rug like leaf like page of book – Scripture, Bible, Qur'an are they all the same? Magic streams of consciousness.

Effort - Woman in hijab – beautiful tiles are creative expression. patterns instead of images. Carrying water; elixir of life.

Promise 'The child is gift of Allah – God' ... a focus of love most precious.

Realisation Prayer beads. Five Pillars of Islam: Belief, prayer, alms, fasting, pilgrimage.

ROBERT HOSKIN Cycle 3 Reflections on Mayadda's images, an Iraqi immigrant

Acrylic paint with cotton gauze and shellac on cardboard
Framed and mounted \$580

Night prayers

Prayer is like a container, open and reliant on the gift of grace.

The new day

Filled with grace the new bride rides forth into marriage

Night flight

Love filled nights bring joy and delight

The new child

Grace overflows with the gift of a new child

RACHEL JOHNSON - Cycle 5 - Reflections on Felicity's response to Mayadda's images

hand painted on silk
Framed and mounted \$580

Looking through God's keyhole at the world – sunrise, landscape and flowing water
Where did the water come from? God's water jug replenishes us.

Prayer beads decorated with symbols of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. We pray for friendship and understanding amongst the peoples of the three Abrahamic faiths: Jews, Muslims and Christians.

Two individuals, two doorways to 2 different worlds blending together to make a new way of being together.

NATURAL WORLD

NIKKI GREEN - Cycle 1 - In response to the texts supplied

Fragment from the Talmud – Etching on rice paper. --\$190

The order of the Torah and subsequently its' commentaries in the Talmud – symbolise the structure of the Word and the Book. This very structure is juxtaposed against the others in the series that represent the organic essence of nature. The whole notion of the MultiFaith Post Card Exhibition is reflection on texts. I therefore, saw it fit to include a portion of text from the Talmud expressing laws relating to marriage.

(Framed and mounted – in group of 3 \$470)

Western Australian Wild Flowers – Lino Cut

Inspired by the text from the Song of Songs (8:6) "Set me as a seal upon your heart". I see nature as the universal divine presence. In nature I see the combination of male and female; a unification and a separateness.. The printmaking process exemplifies the underlying theme, where the floral design carved into the lino becomes 'the seal' stamped upon...

Leaf – Etching on paper

The delicacy of God's work.

Sublime – Gouache on paper

Through colours I am representing 'Women are the twin half of men'. Like the colours they are opposite yet complimentary.

NIKKI GREEN Cycle 2 - A response to Mayadda's work

Framed and mounted – group of 3 \$470

The hidden and the revealed - Paper cut over pencil drawing --\$190

Non figurative patterns of Islamic architecture hiding the figure of a veiled woman.

Stencilled Hands (Red and Yellow / 1 & 2)

Stencilled patterned hands suggesting henna decoration over images of the sitting veiled woman transforms the literal into the abstract.

Shalom Hand

Using the word Shalom (Hebrew for 'Peace') repeatedly, I have written the word in a loose calligraphic and gestural style, building up the image so that the text becomes less literal and more patterned.

NIKKI GREEN - Cycle 3 - Fractal (1, 2, 3, 4)

watercolour on paper

Framed and mounted \$580

Having recently found a magnificent fossil I was captivated by the intricacy of the design and

the sacred geometry of the spiral. The fractal came to me as an overriding theme upon my first reading of the text. I've also responded to the diversity of work in this exhibition as it seemed to be a recurring theme throughout – the embryo, water, starfish, representation of life and of eternal spirit.

FELICITY DOHERTY -Cycle 4 - Response to Nikki's first cycle

watercolour and gouache on paper

Framed and mounted \$580

Colours pink green complementary ... suggesting balance ... mandala like circle like seal ... strength ... connecting partnership ... interlaced fingers ... composed of text ... calligraphic scriptures ... Torah ... earthiness of plant forms ... growing in profusions ... text lines on skin ... identity flowing outwards ... whorls ... stars dancing like starfish on a beach.

GAY CLARKE, Photographer
Cycles 1 & 2

Becoming part of this multi-faith project has been for me an extraordinary process, as much of my life over the past several years has been.

In this work, I have explored a psychological process, one that shows the passing through different stages of existence to reach a state of full development.

A state of unity with the world around me, or perhaps liberation from weakness, confusion, and fear.

This work is about infinite potential, faith and the return to paradise.