

# Collaborative arts-based research for social justice



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# Aims of session



- To discuss my forthcoming book, ‘Collaborative Arts-based Research for Social Justice’ (Routledge)
- To focus on the magic of storytelling
- To look at examples of stories told through collaborative arts-based methods
- To consider some of the paradoxes that arise through this way of working



# Storytelling



- There is a timelessness to storytelling as shifting versions of tales are handed down through generations and storytelling plays its ‘primary role...in the household of humanity’ (Benjamin 1969/2006, p373).



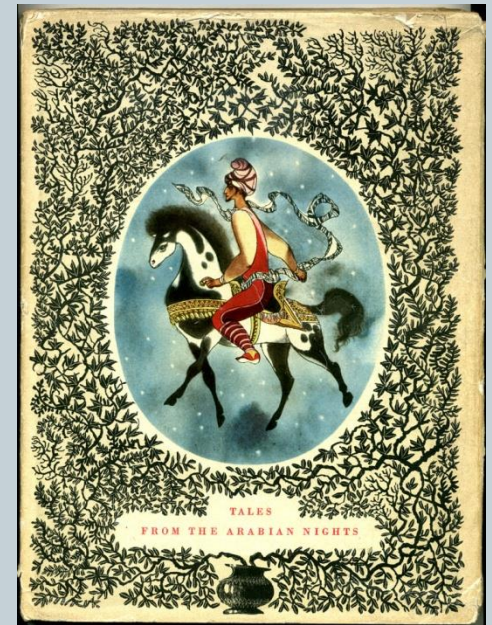
- ‘Only stories and magic really endure. How tiny one’s area of understanding is art teaches one perhaps better than philosophy’ (Murdoch 1999, p13).

# The Nights



- If the stories you believe define your range of possibility, then you have to change the story to something else. In the stories of great men work had no value and so people who worked were less than those who were employed or who had no need of a wage. In the old stories, being poor was a punishment for working and the wealth of those who did not need to work was a reward for their special talents and extra cleverness. ... The great men rode plots of achievements and adventure, while the rest of the world were stuck tight in their destinies of disrespect. Telling the story the great men's way meant erasing the work and contribution of the rest of the world. Of course, when you rubbed out all the people underneath, it looked as if the great men could fly.

(Bhattacharyya 1998)



# Liz Lochead: The Storyteller

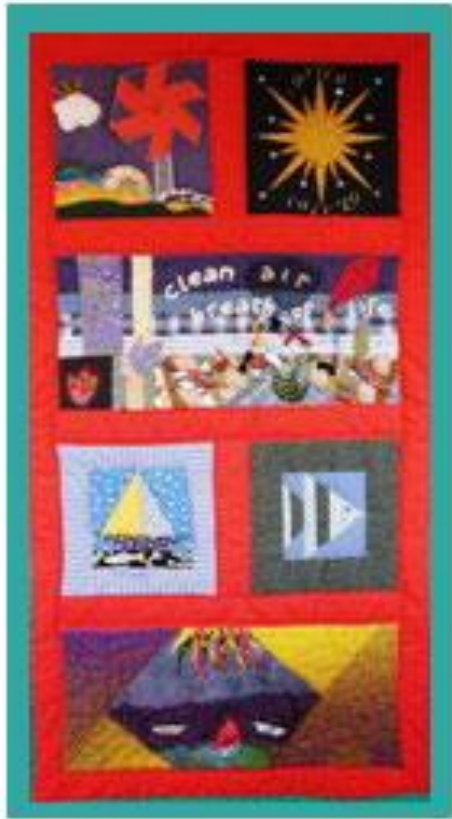


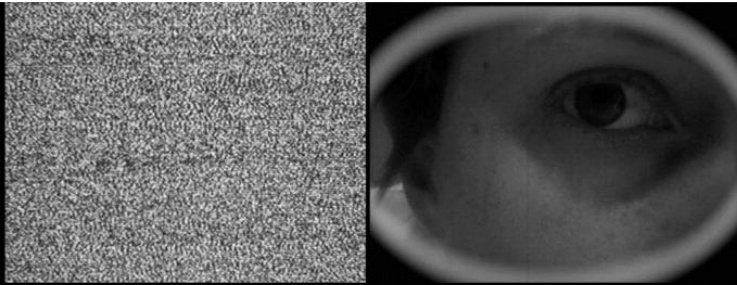
No one could say that the stories were useless  
for as the tongue clacked  
five or forty fingers stitched  
corn was grated from the husk  
patchwork was pieced  
or the darning was done...

And at first light...  
the stories dissolved in the whorl of the ear  
but they  
hung themselves upside down  
in the sleeping heads of the children  
till they flew again  
into the storyteller's night.

(2003, p79)





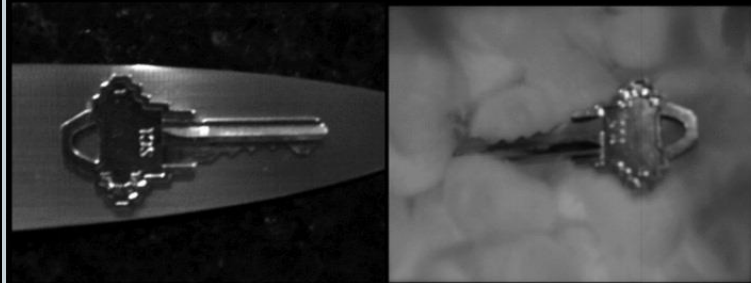


When the lessons from Dr. Phil  
didn't touch my soul  
I signed myself in  
to be asked again and again  
on a scale of one to ten,  
how are you feeling today?



Nurses who bring  
little plastic cups

filled with calm or happiness or sleep,  
take their coffee on the cool side  
but again and again I remember  
there is a lock on that door  
that I am not allowed  
close enough to see.



Friends and family come and go  
assuring themselves  
as their purses are checked at the door  
it's not that bad a place to be  
"She's in the best of hands"  
But I sleep with a sharpened  
piece of plexiglass in my sock  
just to be on the safe side.





# Conclusions



- What to listen for
  - - the silent voice
  - - the playful voice
  - - the defiant voice
- Why is one story told and not another?
- Why is it told in that particular way to that particular audience?

There is a necessity to describe the world 'in ways that make possible encounter with mystery' (Starhawk 1987, p26).



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