

PART I

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FOUNDATIONS, HISTORY,  
AND IMAGINAL AWARENESS



# Art as Contemplative Practice

## Beginnings

Practice traditions such as *vipassana* meditation stress the importance of upright physical posture. This core foundation enables practitioners to feel alert in their bodies while nonjudgmentally observing sensations, thoughts, and emotions. Similarly, this chapter defines a posture of foundational information referred to throughout this book. Establishing a base of pertinent ideas supports our investigation into how art functions as contemplative practice. Beginning with transcendent and immanent views of creation, the chapter then turns to the core relationships between art, imaginal wisdom, and yoga including *kundalini-sakti* and the *spanda* impulse. Integrated throughout, are personal reflections that catalyzed my predisposition toward this material. Many of these subjects are further developed later in the book.

### Ascent, Descent, and Imaginal Space

As a child, growing up in Miami, Florida, I would often go fishing. While trolling on Biscayne Bay, schools of dolphins would appear. Like shiny metallic sewing needles, they would stitch the sea by diving deep, disappearing for a while, eventually surfacing to breathe and then dive again. Watching in amazement, I would wonder about the vast seen tabletop of the water contrasted with the dark, invisible world below. Later I came to realize that the dolphins were plunging and reappearing similar to the way visual symbols behave, from unconscious to preconscious to conscious awareness. Recalling now how the dolphins sutured the sea continues to reinforce this germane teaching.

Visual symbols are the transportation between unconscious inner realms and awareness. They provide graphic embodiment for unknown felt material to manifest as relatable content. Symbols help to rebalance psychological

forces by materializing discrepancies within the psyche. For example, craving riches in day-to-day life, yet dreaming at night about nonmaterial spiritual adventures, conveys the point. When received and embraced, symbols serve as compensatory messengers to help break patterns and recalibrate personal values (Harding, 1961).

Transcendent subject matter addressed throughout this book is difficult to write about. Finding accurate language for experientially existent, yet indescribable transpersonal phenomena presents a dilemma. In order to tease apart the subtleties of these semantic challenges I am using the following term(s):

1. The intangibility of ether or formless phenomena (ascend, expand, and dissolve).
2. The tangibility of form-based, material phenomena (descend, condense, and embody).
3. The in-between, bidirectional realm of imaginal phenomena linking form and formlessness (image-sight).

### Ether and the Emerging Formless

I use the term *ether/formless phenomena* to represent expansive potential space. Ether is related to the word *ethereal* and here is prepositionally described as around, over, under, between, beyond, or even within the subtle interstices of solid forms. This emptiness is not object, item, or event until we think it so. Essentially, void space is the subtlety of boundless freedom emerging from fertile emptiness. And from this emptiness, thoughts or handmade objects surface for expression. Many creation stories across cultures and throughout time, like the Genesis passage, refer to a great void of dark, formless fertility. These stories consistently teach that whatever arises from the abundance of emptiness contains both the origin and trajectory of nothingness becoming something. Boundless, yet with direction, consider how formlessness/emptiness and form/object are freely joined together within any creative process. Think of a blank canvas, lump of clay, or roll of film. And back up even farther to consider all of the previous interconnected, known, and unknown events that produced the physicality of each material. The entirety of any creative process implies a co-arising, interdependent, genesis of perceived and hidden conditions.

Contemplative traditions such as Buddhism teach that sensation or phenomenon is not a single, independent arising event. Rather, all phenomena are codependent as they surface (Rabten, 1999). Although human perception might tell us otherwise, the subtleties within any creative process are inter-

connected, emerging from five interiorized aggregates or *skandhas*, which are: form, feeling, discernment, influential cognitive elements, and the essence of consciousness (Rabten, 1999; Trungpa, 2005). All five, which will be discussed in chapter 2, make any moment internally known to us with either clarity or confusion. Since we are able to perceive past, present, and future possibilities, we become well practiced at solidifying illusions and believing in them, especially when it comes to imagining the future. It is within this subject of fertile potential that words such as God or *Puruṣa* (Purusha) appear in theological vocabularies referring to an all-pervasive eternal Consciousness.

Each unborn moment is an ever-present space of surfacing possibility. Artists know this territory well. Standing before any art material presents a multitude of possibilities. Rather than open to this opportunity, people new to art often crave certainty or predictability like the banality found in paint by number kits or coloring books. Yet opening to the ambiguity of now, as so eloquently presented by a blank canvas, raw piece of clay, or random moment to be photographed, is where ethereal potential is waiting.

As embodied consciousness, or embodied infinity, we are literally creation knowingly contemplating itself, and art becomes the embodiment of that quintessence. To create as an artist is to join with this fundamental universal pulse beating as the heart and soul of our planet. Each time we enter into the creative process of manifestation, we bring something new into the world that has never existed before, nor will ever exist again in that exact same form regardless of our capacity to make accurate reproductions. The magnificent generosity of creation observed in art, biology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, and metaphysics is stunning and spans the ages as geological, biological, ecological, cultural, and spiritual fact. This list of signposts only approximates the vast reaches of creation in its countless seen and unseen manifestations.

When Mount St. Helens in Washington State exploded in 1980, total annihilation spread across the landscape. The devastation was immense, leveling entire forests for miles. Between this destruction and the interdependent, co-arising renewal of then and now, the same land is greening and alive as it was before the eruption. Destruction and renewal exist side by side in nature and in art. Painters scrape away pigment as they get closer to their intention. Sculptors chisel away rock and editors cut film in order to discern their way toward clarity. I always feel that I have to be willing to lose something I am working on in order to break free of habitual patterns and find what is waiting for me.

Art is an awareness practice filled with numerous avenues for discovery, be it moving toward emotional or physical pain, joy or celebration, or accessing the creative friction of erosive forces. As a practice, art trains us to

see the unique in the familiar and to respond to CREATION with creation. Like prayer, through art we link with our embodied vastness by artistically responding and joining with this inner creator. Within this fundamental connection provided by art materials and processes, we no longer have to feel separate from creator and creation, which is a core reason for so much spiritual anxiety in modern life. To feel separate from the Divine causes many to feel the existential grief associated with a limited, alone, solid sense of self.

By Divine I do not mean a physical, external, anthropomorphized sky God. Rather, humans embody divinely immanent, quintessential conscious awareness and through art they can explore the endless fundamental possibilities of creation. The great pronouncement from the *Upaniṣads*<sup>1</sup> (Upanishads), ‘*tat tvam asi*,’ which means “That art thou,” orients us toward the budding potential of our innermost, transcendent Self (Feuerstein, 2003, p. 258). Thus, art is an expressive pathway to That which is pure and vast within us. Carl G. Jung (1998) considered the Indian notion of the Self a foreign concept for the Eurocentric worldview. However, Jung acknowledges that the Self is an embodied spiritual “Source” that is not different from God as the unlimited intelligence of universal essence. Contemplating this Source begins to shift perspective from I-ness towards absorption in the vastness of the Self, which is the goal of many spiritual traditions. Eventually, suggests Jung, practitioners realize that they are not only contained in this Divinity, they are of this same transcendent Divinity.

### Solidity, Form, and Descent

Ascent—to rise, climb, merge, and dissolve into the Divine—is a theme in many spiritual traditions. Descent—to fall, drop or plunge—is an equally powerful theme often associated with negative connotations. We fall from Grace or drop into the underworld during a crisis. Within monotheistic institutions there is dualistic split between good and bad, heaven and hell. From this divided view, a positive/negative dialectic emerges producing either-or relationships. The question is, How do we listen to and mend these splits?

The beauty of a dark waiting underworld beneath rocks or within caves summons us closer to obscure spaces. Yet we tend to favor habitual security by going inside as night falls, avoiding the lush veiled subtlety of darkness. What is counter to habit is good for the development of intuition; perhaps the most important ally in artistic work. There are moments when it is time to step off of the edge of safety, plunge into darker unknown spaces, and take healthy risks. One way I learn about these leaps of faith is to enter unfamiliar landscapes with intense curiosity.

When possible, I seek out caves like at Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park in Montana and experience these fantastic dimly lit places. One enters into the cavernous darkness with respect, knowing that the ground, walls, and canopy consist of delicate rock formations patiently sculpted over millennia. The temperature quickly drops, light fades, and one soon realizes that tactile knowing is an indispensable way of receiving information. Gently feeling into the darkness and tenderly touching the cool stone surfaces reveal the contoured language of rock and time. The face feels moisture while the ears hear the expanding, viscous silence. Though foreign to usual perception, this “down there” darkness, too, is home.

Figuratively speaking, spelunking is a skill for the contemplative artist. To journey into emotional spaces where it is silent, dark, perhaps even hellish, can reveal ripe opportunity. Like many dialectic relationships, the freedom to ascend and descend does not imply contradictions of either-or, positive-negative undertones. If willing, we can go toward counterintuitive, prohibited subjects and mend the splits of dualistic thinking, while participating in the discovery of personal wholeness.

The exploration of formlessness promises revelation. In alchemy, the empty space of ether is the *prima materia*, or the original material from which all forms and ideas emerge. From the emptiness, a soon-to-arrive unborn moment emerges bringing the assurance of manifestation.

Art teaches us to fall in love with the physical world including what is easy to see as well as what repels us. Dead flowers are as interesting to look at as a living bouquet. Mindfully perceiving with full sensory awareness deepens participation in any life event.

When I worked inpatient psychiatric care with hospitalized teens, they often announced their boredom. “How can you be bored?” I responded to them. “If you are bored it is because you are boring.” Yet they had a point as many were deprived of any sort of arts education. So I would teach them how to see through paper towel tubes, photograph with homemade pinhole cameras, and investigate their surroundings with magnifying glasses. We found ways to experiment and build small dreams such as drum sets and life-sized guitars out of cardboard and thrown-away ice cream store barrels. Over time, boredom moved into remission. The teens became emotionally and aesthetically engaged and excited about their sensory capacity to receive the world, feel their feelings, and step into the emptiness of blank canvases and cardboard remnants in order to create their stories. Most encouraging, they repeatedly requested new, more complex assignments. They were alive and they knew it, learning that persistence always yields results when attempting to manifest unseen ideas.

## Image-Site/In-Sight: Imaginal Dialogues Within Liminal Space

During my life, I have lived in several warm climates in Asia and the United States. When it was unbearably hot, I always appreciated an oscillating fan to circulate the stale humid air. Although I could not see the subtle wind currents, I still felt the cooling breeze across my face and body. Sometimes small particles of dust would join the swirling air and make the faint wind patterns visible. Imagination often feels like this to me as streams of breezy images circulate throughout the day, beckoning my attention. Remarkably, these inner events coalesce and arrive as spontaneous, noteworthy visitors. Consider how a random door SLAMMING shut or the faint scent of a summer rose bush suddenly becomes a catalyzing moment setting images in motion.

Like cooling background weather patterns, the imagination imagines itself imagining. As a faculty, like an indispensable appendage, it freely crosses liminal borders between waking life, dream life, and other states of consciousness. Boundaries soften between time, space, and memory as images anneal into living narratives. All we have to do is pay attention to the flow of images moving throughout the bandwidth of the psyche. When we orient attention in this way, introspective revelation takes shape, especially when plowed into art materials and processes. In this way art deepens imaginal intelligence and the instinctive truth of images (Hillman, 1999).

### SUFI TRADITIONS AND IMAGINAL WISDOM

Within Sufi traditions, prayer pairs with imaginal methods for entering numinous mystery. Religion, at its core, is the experience of holy, transcendental transformation. It is in this context that I use the word *numinous*.

Henry Corbin's (1958/1969) work on the philosopher-mystic Ibn al-Arabi addresses the importance of imagination as an appendage-like faculty used in contemplative life. In his study of al-Arabi, William Chittick (1989) noted that intellectual traditions embraced by the West resulted in a split from other faculties of inquiry practiced in the East.

Reason can only take seekers so far until they need other forms of transport into mystical and spiritual realms. Corbin (1958/1969) observed how imagination is often misunderstood as fantasy. He noted a lack of validation for "an intermediate level between empirically verifiable reality and unreality" (p. 181) or fantasy. Between the rational realm of empiricism and the impulsive, unchecked territory of fantasy resides the indispensable capability of the

imaginal. Here the practitioner can develop the “supersensory sensibility” (p. 182), whereby the Divine can arrive through images and be communed with and served. Corbin sees this perspective as opposite to the often embraced position of “*creatio ex nihilo*” (p. 182), which means God creating everything from nothing. Such a position, Corbin felt, degrades the notion of creation as theophany, or the appearance of the Divine through imagined images. Within this view, prayer becomes theophanic imagination accessing the Divine (p. 182). The God to whom such a prayer is directed creates the experience of that God through the construction of imaginal revelation.

Neither wholly rational nor reckless fantasy, imagination is closely linked to intuition, insight, and therefore to empathy. Images arrive as visiting entities to be listened to, felt, and followed. Through imaginal mindfulness, a personally devised term, we greet our guests by nonjudgmentally observing their moment-to-moment arrival and evolving narratives. To carefully observe them, feel within their presence, and imagine into their unique manifestation, teaches plurality. Also taught is to do no harm. If the senses were carefully trained to see and adore all that is around and in us as forms of magnificence—then why would we perpetrate self or other harm? When we do not see the dignified, systemic, and sentient majesty of images, animals, ecosystems, and cultures, we slip into objectified permission to injure these others. Art as contemplative practice can reverse this tragic tendency by feeling into what is other, listening to this plural pulse of other, and making meaningful contact with these inner diversities.

Images, metaphors, and symbols then offer revelatory insight into relational and personal truth. Listening to images, following them, and collaborating with them is a key goal of contemplative art processes. The deep well of the imagination is the vehicle for entering what at first seems illogical. For example, consider the heart, which is a precious inward destination found in many contemplative traditions. This central embodied space has its own metaphoric language. Opening, entering, and setting a place within the heart for worship are all imaginal practices. We literally pour our heart out and into this process. While this likely makes sense, it is also illogical at first. Yet, we can loosen formulaic resistance and thoughtfully pierce these chambers of possibility. Below are two examples of loosening defenses through embodied art practices in order to access the passport of imagination. Freeing vital life force through vigorous movement, coordinated with breath and mark making, quiets the conceptual mind. Access to interior domains such as the heart is made easier with exercises that privilege the innate intelligence of the body to think and feel inward. For additional examples, see Appendix B.



Figure 1.1. Person doing active drawing (1). Photograph by the author.



Figure 1.2. Person doing active drawing (2). Photograph by the author.

## Art as Yoga and Contemplative Practice

In 2013, the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, which is part of the Smithsonian complex of museums, hosted an ambitious show entitled *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*. The curator, Debra Diamond, assembled a team of scholars to research and present the iconographical, historical, and transnational lineages of yoga. From ancient texts and manuscripts to recent popular culture examples, the gallery showcased the manifold legacies of yoga, East and West. This extraordinary show exemplified the urge to make yoga visible by illustrating how ineffable content was materialized over the millennia for spiritual instruction (Diamond, 2013).

Art as an awareness practice silently aligns body, mind, and imagination with the present moment. Likewise, yoga is a practice of aligning the spiritual domains of body, mind, and behavior with Now in the service of transcending suffering. To accomplish this intention, yoga prescribes time-tested methods for cultivating skillful conduct, moral ideals, and a disciplined relationship with thoughts and actions. In order to learn and relearn the orientation of present-focused awareness, yoga illuminates our finite experience of personified awareness with an expansive, revelatory view of the infinite consciousness that we are.

The distinguished art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy (1934) considered yoga and art as the integral union of dexterity, attention, concentration, and absorption that literally takes form in the practice of aesthetic acts. Artists working from this perspective combined contemplative, yogic presence with the notion of visiting realms where angelic deities live. The goal was to see what needed to be reproduced so that others could participate in these revelatory experiences. Conversely, reducing art exclusively to banal perception and superficial responses limits contemplative sensitivity (Mookerjee & Khanna, 1977).

In his introduction to *The Mirror of Gesture* (Nandikeśvara, 1917), Coomaraswamy (1917) observed:

The arts are not for our instruction, but for our delight, and this delight is something more than pleasure, it is the God-like ecstasy of liberation from the restless activity of the mind and the senses, which are the veils of all reality, transparent only when we are at peace with ourselves. From the love of many things we are led to the experience of Union. (p. 9)

Coomaraswamy elegantly sums up how art can quiet the mind and dissolve veils that fog contemplative perception. This yogic view of art connects us to the nondual unifying consciousness that splits and repeatedly divides into the infinite forms of the physical world. The magnificence of the natural

environment exposes seemingly unending patterns that reveal how the one becomes many.

By turning awareness inward through practices such as meditation and yoga, the phenomenology of consciousness is steadily revealed. This mounting contemplative knowledge guides inner transformation of unchecked urges like libido and instinctual desires. Early psychoanalytic thinkers, with their interest in impulsive urges and unconscious motivation were on the right track. Although certainly interested in the depths of the psyche, early Freudians did not probe deeply enough beyond their limited view of the ego and the analytic unconscious. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Jung fortunately arrived at the doorsteps of these subtle regions of the psyche. Through heuristic research into his personal process of struggle, he descended deep into the interior imaginal world of the psyche. It was here, in the basement of his active imagination, that he could fall apart and rebuild from the wellspring of healing images that came to him (Jung, 2009). For Jung, and for us too, the arrival of inner images stimulates fundamental questions. What is their origin? From where do they come? And how can traditions such as yoga help us to surface answers?

As a young boy I caught glimpses of these questions the first time I saw Russian matryoshka dolls. Seeing these nesting dolls, one emerging from the other, I began to grasp that one reality could coexist as multiple, hidden realities, from the obvious to the subtle. The same concept was confirmed when a little older. As mentioned earlier, I spent a good deal of time at the beach staring at the ocean. The perpetual moving surface of waves and currents revealed an obvious view of the upper layers of the sea. But underneath the water's façade was a world I could barely grasp and only imagine. At around the same age, my haircuts took me to the neighborhood barbershop. While sitting in the chair I delighted in how the mirrors were positioned in such a way that they reflected infinite permutations of me looking at myself. Time became visual as I observed reflected spatial versions of an unlimited self. With the nesting dolls, my visits to the ocean and to the barbershop, it was clear to me as a boy that there were worlds I could intuit, but could not fully see. While somewhat cliché, these were important lessons.

### *Kuṇḍalinī-śakti*, the Primordial *Spanda* Impulse, and the *Ātman-Brahman* Relationship

Later in life, I became steeped in a yoga tradition and lineage. There, I learned about the subtle ever-present *Kuṇḍalinī-śakti*, or primordial creative force. She emerges as the ultimate manifesting life pulse. She has a dynamic aspect, which is *spanda*, the essence and vibratory throb of creation (Singh, 1992). At the

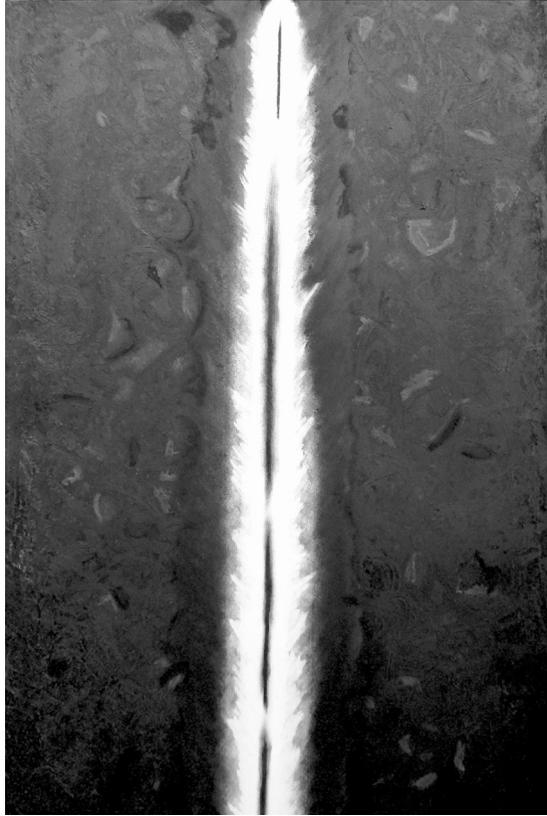


Figure 1.3. *Spanda Impulse*. Original artwork by the author.

most fundamental level, art and the creative process are expressive manifestations of the nondual *spanda* pulse that is the *kunḍalinī-śakti*. Moreover, *spanda* is the primary, supremely intelligent force manifesting in the world of objects, perceived as cascading dualities, ripe for artistic investigation. The artist inquires into these diverse subjects by working through manifest forms back toward their subtle origins, a point implicit in Coomaraswamy's view of art as yoga. From the subtle to the manifest and the manifest back toward the subtle, art makes spiritual life visible.

Art as yoga and contemplative practice aims to align with the universal creative *spanda* force. The principles of creation become forms of supplication for venerating divinity and consequently arriving at states of contentment and serenity (Knight, 1987). *Enthios*, Greek for “the God within” (Ayto, 1990,

p. 203), is the etymological root of enthusiasm. Passion for creative and imaginative work supports inner and outer discovery of the many textures of *enthios*. To find our way, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) emphasized that happiness is found through direct absorption with engaging experiences. Immersion in the moment will lead to focused attention whereby time stops, concentration increases, and action merges with awareness (Cooper, 1998).

Within this view of art and *enthios*, including purposeful engagement with materials, processes, and images, collaboration with the *spanda* pulse is inevitable. Art makes contemplative domains of *spanda* spatially and visibly accessible. Materials and processes help us to see space (and time), enter space, add space, subtract space, edit space, mix space, fill space, empty space, layer space, and infuse time with space.

Creating art and viewing creations made by others refines faculties of observing, examining, perceiving, scrutinizing, watching, and inspecting. Noticing with fine-tuned, panoramic awareness allows us to see the many textures of NOW and translate this awareness into artworks. Included in this translation process is awareness of the subtle *Ātman-Brahman* reality behind any manifestation.

Within Hindu-yoga traditions, *Brahman* is the name for the uncreated, unmanifest universal consciousness holding the unfolding cosmos. Described often as existing behind the behind, within the within, and hidden beyond the hidden ALL that is or eternally will ever be. *Brahman* is the ultimate source consciousness of the universe. *Ātman*, or the Self, is *Brahman* interiorized within the human heart and mind, as the individual Self-expression of the Universal Brahman. William Mahony (1998a) notes, “The World-Soul is identical to the sublime essence of the inner Self residing within all beings” (p. 165). Yoga is practicing our way to incremental degrees of reunification with this hidden, embodied divine relationship with the *Ātman/Self*.

The “mind in its conventional state is sedimented with various impurities,” which obscure perception of this fundamental understanding of pure consciousness (Chapple, 1984, p. xiii). Sadly, the result is recycled pain. We continue to spin on the wheel of suffering until right understanding is established. As we will see in the upcoming chapters, combining art with yoga and meditation refines our knowledge of these repeated patterns. With the help of archetypal forces like the *śakti* (shakti) and her many manifestations such as qualities of the Goddess *Sarasvatī* (Saraswati)<sup>2</sup>, we can literally create our way through and beyond patterns of anguish.

## Creation and the Divine Mother

*Śakti* is synonymous with Devi or Goddess. She is that eternal and universal presence that manifests the entirety of creation. The heart of tantric practices,

she is the focus of ritual and worship. The etymological root *śak* (shak) means “to be capable of” (Muktananda, 1979, p. 20). This capacity refers to that aspect of consciousness that is active. This dynamic presence is the ultimate cause and change within the entire known and imagined universe. *Śakti* therefore is the ultimate muse for the artist to commune with during creative work. As Devi, she is transcendent; her ultimate, vast power includes her capacity to create, maintain, destroy, and absorb the cosmos (Khanna, 1979). She is also immanent and therefore alive in all beings (Pintchman, 2001). As the supreme Divine Mother, she has the power to manifest every conceivable possibility.

Blissful and wrathful, *Śakti*, as an amalgamation of her various forms, manifests and reabsorbs all things at all times, in all places. She has three main powers/*śaktis* that are important to recognize for artistic and contemplative work—*icchā* (will), *jñāna* (knowledge), and *kriyā* (action). While *Śiva* (Shiva) represents the vastness of the creators’ reach, the blended combination of these three powers emancipates *Śakti*’s energies to become the full “existence of created Being” (Jee,<sup>3</sup> 1988, p. 26). Additional material on this subject can be found in the section titled “Kashmir Shaivism and Art.”

When the word *Śakti* is capitalized, it signifies the singular, ultimate Divine Feminine. In this form, she has no beginning or ending point. To worship her is to revere creation itself, offering adoration to the supreme creative principle. Divine Will, or *icchā Śakti*, coalesces in the creative act in order to feel, research, and manifest. It is through the motivation of will (not desire) that we initiate action. When intention is brought to this process, alignment with action becomes a willful act, even when working spontaneously. The intention to relax control and work in unstructured ways is still an act of will that can be mindfully witnessed.

*Jñāna* can be considered as emanating layers of manifest and latent intelligence and artwork is where this knowledge can materialize for contemplative investigation. We see ideas made visible in art through the expression of acquired skills and created work. The universal power behind all layers of this process is *Śakti*’s complete freedom or *svātantrya*, which is the foundation of all creation. It is through *Śakti*’s *svātantrya* that we can imagine anything, anytime, anywhere. As our free will, it is her autonomy inside of us come alive.

And then we act. *Kriyā* or power of action is the dynamic manifestation of will and knowledge and likely the most obvious expression of *Śakti* in art. Creative work is something we do to innovate, invent, and produce. Removing all pronouns like *we* and *I*, and sensing for a moment the subtle forces behind all gestures of our expressive work, we begin to see why the divine feminine force of *Śakti* is worshipped for the freedom she inspires.

One form of *Śakti* relevant for this discussion is *Sarasvatī*, the Goddess of wisdom, sacred speech, and the arts. She is a specific manifestation of



Figure 1.4. *Home for Sarasvatī*. Original artwork by the author.

the Divine Goddess, serving as the archetypal patron of wisdom communication, gracious thoughts, the arts, and fluidity of the creative spirit. *Sarasvatī*'s name, which means "she who flows towards the Self," connects her to all that pours forth (Mahony, 1998a, p. 38). To invoke the muse of the *spanda* pulse and flow of imaginal processes through speech and imagination is to invite *Sarasvatī* to emerge as a guide on the journey of harnessing and unblocking the creative current.