Tell me about what brought you to Stillpoint.
Before I found Stillpoint, I was solitarily working in my corner: I was practicing yoga and art therapy, and I was very interested in my job, but I also wanted to be inspired and challenged by like-minded individuals. I didn't want to work in a traditional clinic, that was clear, but I *did* want colleagues—or friends—in the profession. I came across Stillpoint Berlin around one of their Psychoanalysis on the Street events. When I met with them, we just clicked, and took off from there.

What does a typical art-therapy group session at your Stillpoint practice look like?
At the beginning of an art-therapy group session, I'll give a tiny directive, something that gets the process of making art started in a way that makes it clear that it's not about the product—nobody's going to start critiquing, it's more about the process. Then I allot approximately one hour to just play, to experiment with a variety of materials that I provide so there's the possibility to explore all the senses through textures, colors, materiality, thickness, which is a way to bypass the critical mind.

> **"It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self." - Donald Winnicott**

Often it happens that the room falls into this really beautiful, connected silence—where everyone is immersed in their work. This strikes me as a very precious moment because we don't seem to have many places left where we can be in this way, both with ourselves *and* with each other. John O´Donohue puts it beautifully: "When there is no space, the soul cannot awaken."

We then view the work together. That has a lot of weight because you're being seen *through* your artwork by this intentional group of people. In the world of art, a lot of ambiguity is tolerated, which I don't think you have so much in the world of language. Because, in art it can be both. It can have this meaning and that meaning, it can be true for me and for you, it can be black and white; it holds a lot of possibility, a lot more than in language. So, artwork can be closer to the unconscious world, which has these discrepancies or nonlinearities.

The artwork holds and reflects elements of this unconscious world. Thus, the viewer can allow it to infuse into their conscious world—for example, verbally—as, and when, they are ready. The group acts as a catalyst, but is also transformed in this process. These are just a few aspects: in truth, the work reveals new layers of meaning every time.

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How does the process look when you work one-on-one?

I allow the entry point to emerge out of the personality structures that the client presents, or simply, based on whatever interests them most. And by "entry point" I mean, any of the modalities I offer to the client, whether an artistic process, a body-work process, or a meditative process. We may shift modalities along the way, as trying to use a preconceived formula seems to detract from that elusive space in which it feels safe enough to excavate, witness, and express wounded parts, and ideally, allow for the sacred space required for healing.

One of the things that I do when working one-on-one is to come into this place where I am welcoming everything that the client is. We know the phrase "loving presence" from Buddhism, for example. So, I model such an attitude as the client engages with their inner work. So, it's very non-hierarchical for me: I am there with my expertise and accepting presence, but the client is the expert in terms of their own experience. I trust completely that what is important will present itself, so I don't overemphasize history or diagnosis, which have often simply become restricting patterns in which the client has learned to move. Instead, I offer alternatives to these limited frameworks.

I do this by working with certain types of phenomena, for example, a particular body movement that I "contact." That is, I make it conscious, I draw attention to something that I notice. And these phenomena usually hold a lot of patterning that has become unconscious. The body is an infinite repository of implicit memory, all of which is available to us in the present moment - when contacted in a mindful state. The moment we make it conscious, we have an opportunity to view it from a distance, and from there, the freedom to choose something else. We can easily experiment with this also in the process of making art. In the relatively safe space that the artwork offers, the client can try out new ways of being before transporting them into real life.

In this process, I don't tend to make personal interpretations; I make meaning only *with* the client, which goes for all my therapeutic work, whether it's body-based or art-based. This gives the client their dignity, their self-respect, and their agency. When I have been a client myself, I've experienced both hierarchical and non-hierarchical approaches to therapy. I found myself especially willing to offer parts of myself when I didn't have the feeling somebody was judging in the background, telling me "this is good, this is bad." There's value in telling someone "it's okay," that whatever I am—or you are—is okay. Only from there can we explore what other possibilities exist for the client—to foster inner freedom. So, I find it to be a very beautiful, non-violent way of working. I also find it very symbolic of how I wish we could work as a society, and as a planet.

This is interesting when you're looking at what Stillpoint could be. Stillpoint has this approach where it recognizes that, as practitioners, we all have different things to bring to the table. But that doesn't mean that one approach or modality is better than the other, or more important. It simply means that we can learn and benefit from each other. I think it's important in therapy to practice something that you can imagine being transported to a bigger arena. And maybe that's a shift that's happening anyway, when you're looking at all the talk about racism, or sexism, or speciesism. It's not a question of either this or that, bigger or smaller, better or worse, it's really a question of what is real equality.

"It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society."
Jiddu Krishnamurti

This non-hierarchical model may help convey the equal importance of art, and the body, and language, and ecology. In practice, none of them is higher than the others—they all are necessary for an integrated whole. What happens in an individual's psychology also transports to their family, their community, their society, and the environment, so integrating the body, art, language, and ecology within one person can have far-reaching effects. That is, what happens within an individual can mirror what is possible on a global scale. This is also a way for me to integrate a spiritual approach that I know from my immersion into Eastern practices.

What led you to focus on art and the body in your psychotherapy practice?

I was immersed into these practices before I had a chance to search for them. I found myself at a boarding school in the middle of the wilderness in India, as a foreigner because I'd been in Germany before that. We had a rigorous schedule of asana practice in the morning, singing and chanting after that, and, in the evening, meditation practice, with philosophy. Those were the pillars, and in-between it was very free. So, I had long periods of time where I would hang out in the wilderness with a book or with a sketch pad. During those years, I was immersed in a set of practices that made wholeness possible in a time when I wasn't socially connected. I found myself held by the trees, by this embodiment practice, by the paper and the materiality of my artwork. Later in my life, I found that I always had something to go back to: nature, art, and Yoga.

Though I don't include yoga in my Stillpoint practice, it is a core element of my therapeutic approach. The last teacher that I had would often see me one-on-one, and the practice was embedded in that relationship. I understood that yoga—when it was given, when it was conceived—it had nothing to do with your leotards and your pretzel shapes and your fancy smoothies. It was this very intimate relationship between teacher and student where you figure out: what are your strengths, what are your weaknesses, what kind of practice could help you to strengthen where you're not so *alive* yet. So, not at all dissimilar to my therapeutic practice. I think the marked difference would be in terms of the general paradigm in which it evolved. In

yoga, deepening the relationship with the Divine through relationship with your teacher, and the ensuing relationship with yourself, is a central aspect of the healing process.

"Try to *love the questions themselves* like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer." -Rainer Maria Rilke

For a long time, I had kept my therapy and my yoga practice separate: I didn't want to be shoved into the esoteric corner in my therapy practice. At the same time, I didn't want my yoga practice to be less than what it could be, by trying to confine it to psychotherapy. I was even practising them in separate towns, in separate 'rooms,' if you will. This separation mirrored having grown up in both the East and the West. But I noticed more and more, that therapy had a lot to give to yoga, and yoga had a lot to give to therapy. Gradually, I am finding that my practice is evolving into something new, something bigger. Respecting the practices in their distinctiveness, but allowing both of them to bring to the table what they've got.