

Windows into ourselves July 4th 2009 London

A baker's dozen of us met in the courtyard of Somerset House to discuss today's workshop* at the Courtauld Institute. We talked about the programme, any ground rules, and ate our lunch. A couple of us paddled in the display of fountains.

In the gallery, we climbed to the top floor and spent a few minutes taking in Kandinsky's 'The Red Circle'. We were then given a lump of dough and invited to shut our eyes and form it into our reactions to the picture. We shared thoughts about doing so with another person and then with the group as we wished.

We were then given papers and pencils/crayons/pastels and given 45 minutes to wander in the three floors of the gallery. We were invited to choose a picture and respond to it. This small gallery has art from medieval to modern times. I liked the colours of the more modern works but settled with the Omega exhibition and Winifred Gill, partly because of the Quaker connection and partly because their pastel colours fitted my pencils better.

I looked quickly at the design of a bag – a repeating design in bright contrasting colours the Friends Ambulance Unit made to bring art, colour and life into the drab world of the First World War. I found a repeating pattern difficult to reproduce. I then used two Winifred Gill's works as inspiration. A butterfly dancer standing on a brown rock became for me an emerging worm with colourful wings. A dancer with castanets encouraged the swirl of movement and life.

We split into two groups and looked at each others choice of picture and the work generated when offered. We saw pictures new to us or pictures we had seen anew. We then moved out to the courtyard again for finishing.

The day was led by Tomo and John. Tomo had attracted five Japanese participants and this added to the experience of the day.

I love these workshops. In a gentle way they use art to teach me about myself and my beliefs. They allow me to explore without forcing me in a particular direction. Thanks again, ASN.

*workshop. This was originally a typo that I corrected. Then I put it back- I like it.