

i had a marvelous dream about a metaphor machine ...

writer, teacher & therapist **marion woodman** says that through our dreams, our whole lives can take on meaning. here she talks about the dynamics between soul, body, movement, yoga & jung.
an interview by **christie pearson**.

featuring artwork by **cristina sitja rubio**

I spent the morning of a day-long workshop riveted to Marion Woodman's voice. Fiery and brilliant at eighty years of age, she analyzed the dreams people offered with a startling frankness and insight, drawing them into broader cultural issues. She encouraged the anger and confusion that lie below the surface to emerge, and we explored its roots.

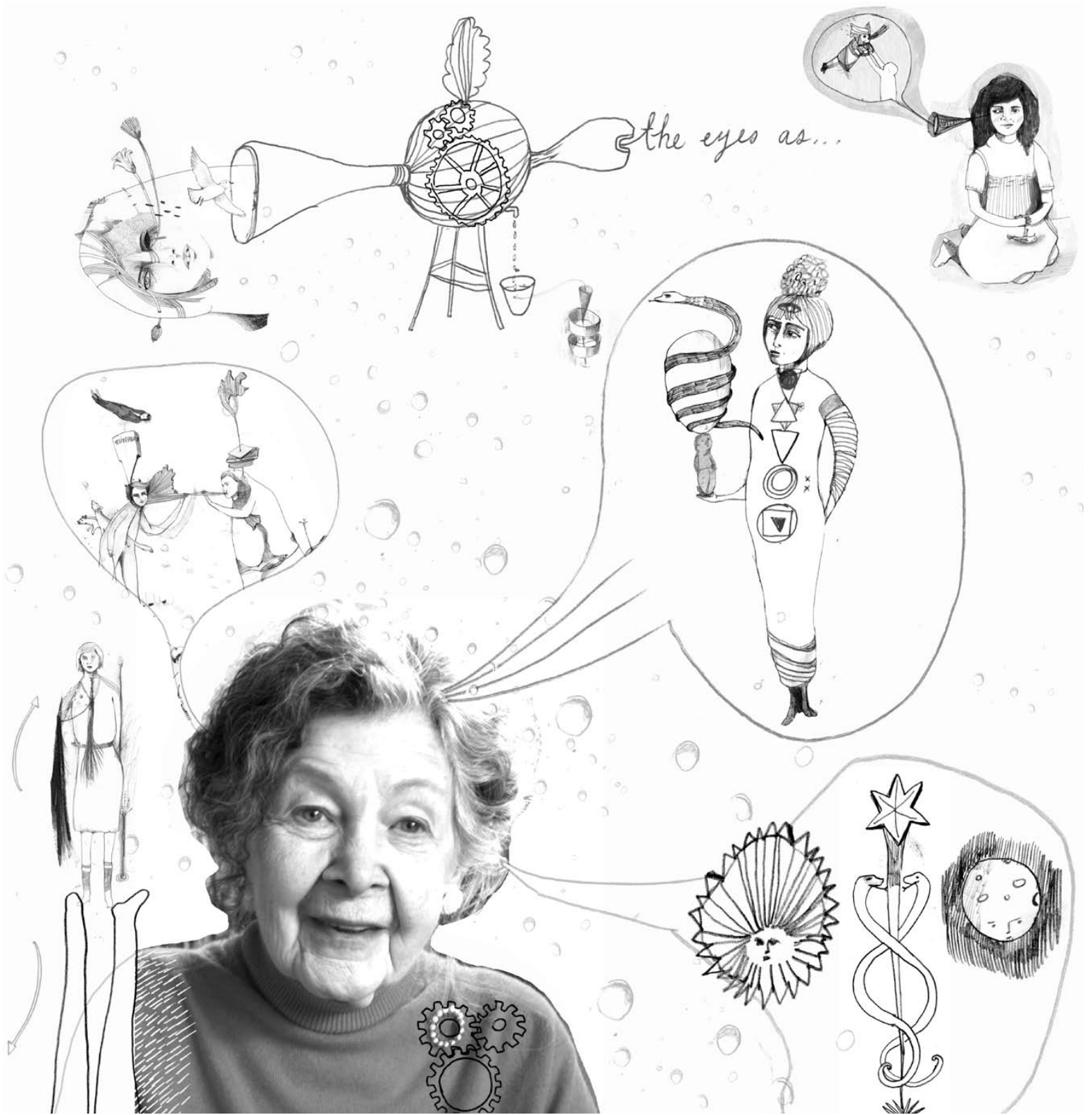
Marion practises psychoanalytic dream analysis as a wisdom tradition. She has branched into unorthodox territories to some Jungians, embracing the body through dream workshops that include

dance and movement. The "body-soul" work she asks us to do reveals the body to be the soul's expression, and the generator of dreams.

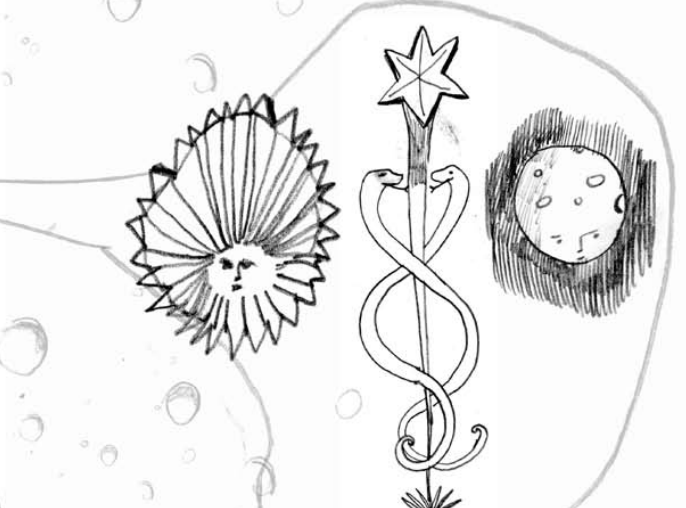
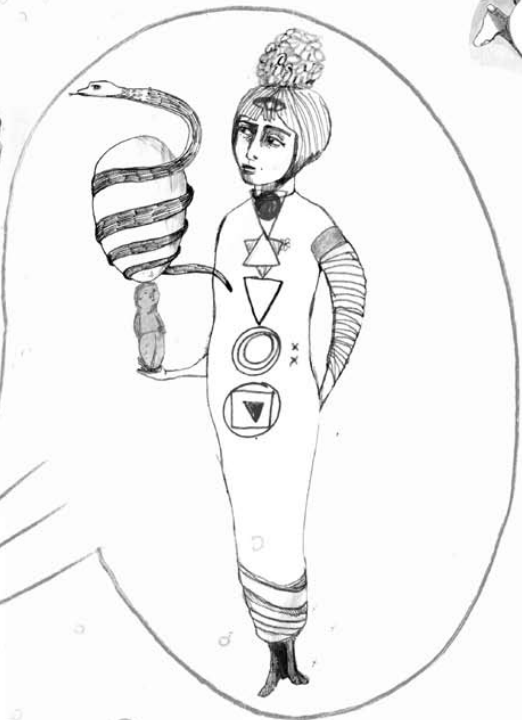
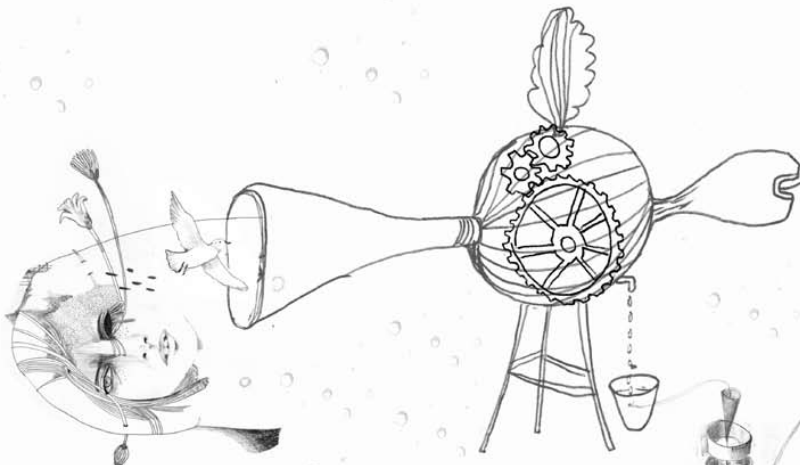
Marion Woodman's many books passionately call us to awaken that inner feminine. To enter into our life's journey deeply and consciously while remaining rooted in the physical world is not for the faint-hearted. For many of us, the world, the body and their imperfections are the very things we hasten to escape through spiritual practice. Marion knew this flight, raised in a pastor's home in

small-town Ontario. She became an English teacher to share the spirit she found within poetry. A constant desire to go deeper then led her to India in 1968 (where her brush with death is described in *The Pregnant Virgin*), to Jungian analysis, then to the Jungian Institute in Zurich in 1973 at the age of forty-five. After training as an analyst, she returned to Ontario to set up her practice.

Her thesis on anorexia was published in 1980 as *The Owl Was a Baker's Daughter: Obesity, Anorexia Nervosa, and the Repressed Feminine*—a subject she



the eyes as...



knew intimately. Each subsequent book has gone further into the heart of the masculine–feminine dynamic, seeking to integrate the bodily experience. While the hero’s journey is well documented, Marion’s writings offer insight into the journey of the heroine. She draws on Marie-Louise von Franz’s analyses of fairy tales, English literature and poetry, contemporary culture and politics and her own psychoanalytic practice.

What she sees emerging in our culture is slowly starting to transform our world. Her 1998 book *The Maiden King: The Reunion of Masculine and Feminine*, co-authored with Robert Bly, looks at a powerful fairy tale about the struggle for union between a man and woman, also explored in the film *Bly/Woodman: On Men and Women*. More recently, she writes about her experience with cancer in *Bone: Dying into Life*.

“In yoga, you are finding out who you are in the body and in the brain,” Marion told me after the workshop. “In the Jungian world, that’s your whole purpose. I think Jung and yoga belong together; the goal is the same.” That evening, I went home to sleep and a night of vivid dreams. I kept thinking about yoga and dream work, how deeply they both have affected me. Is my personal psychology getting in the way of my yoga? Or vice versa? Both ask me to inquire: Who am I?

Christie Pearson *You say that the dream is the language of the soul. What does this mean?*

Marion Woodman For me, and certainly Jung says this too, the connector between body and soul is the image. If you are really working with yoga, the image is coming through the musculature of the body, and there’s where you



get the powerful dreams. And, if you are a true blue Jungian, you believe that there is a destiny that is shaping your end. The dream world is revealing that essence every night whether or not you pay attention to it. The more attention you pay, the greater the gold that you receive every night. You begin to realize that if you’re going to get in-depth dreams, you’ve got to work with yoga or some kind of body work to open that up, so there can be an integration.

CP *You have said, “The body loves metaphor.” And you describe our dreams coming up this way, through the body up into the head.*

MW I once had a marvelous dream about a metaphor machine. I was in a great dark room and there was a huge machine with flashing red lights. I could see the energy line come into this machine, go through very complicated machinery, and then come out the other side transformed. So I asked in the dream, What kind of machine is this? The answer was: a metaphor machine. I realized that the derivative for the word metaphor is “a passing over.” What connects the energy

going through this incredible transformation is the process that happens in our body every night. If we have the courage and we cherish our souls to follow that process, our whole life takes on meaning. You can see that a dream isn’t just a little thing in the night—it’s a destiny working its way through.

CP *Jung thinks that the Indian chakra system is an upside-down version of the Western map of the psyche—we go “down” into the unconscious, while the chakras go “up.” He has warned Westerners that practising yoga could drive a person insane.*

MW I agree with that. If a person is not grounded in their own body—and Westerners tend to be in the head—they can go on a religious spin without their body. They can get into wanting to be spirit that can just rise above the horrors of being in the body, and then lose touch with the body. This can lead to one going crazy. It is just intolerable for body to be left behind and considered menial and dirty in relationship to the soul. The body is the container in which we live on the earth. If the container is strong and beautiful and you’re living your

reality from that body, then there is no problem with yoga. You can go as high as you want to go, because you are connected. There is a connection between the physical body and the spiritual body.

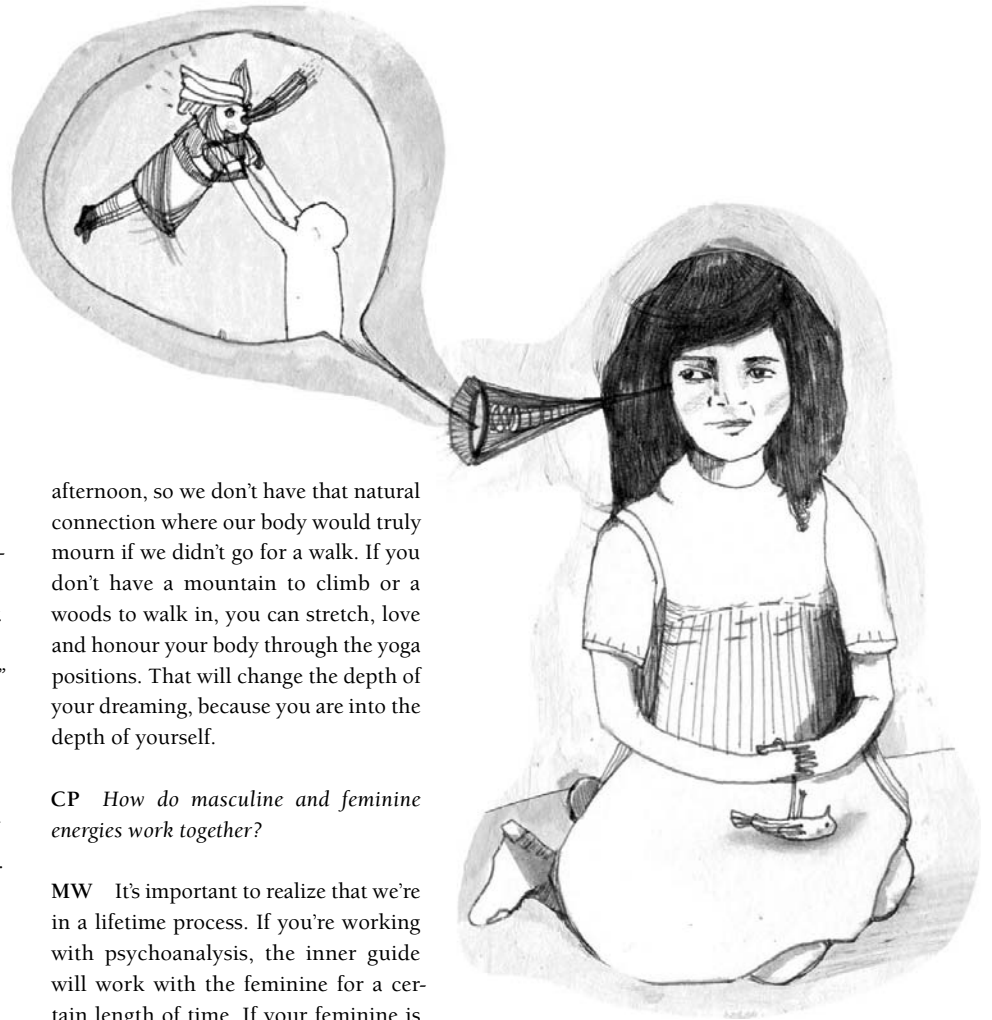
CP *You talk about “body–soul work.” What does that have to do with the physical body and the spiritual body?*

MW In body–soul work, you honour your body because the musculature of the body is going to produce the image. If you do not honour your body, you will not get the deep dreams. You know, I have to say a lot of Jungians are not into the body yet. Jung said that he worked with his body every day because he cut wood, he piled wood, he carved stone; he lived the way Swiss people live with the mountains. We don't have that in our culture; we tend to drive around in our cars. On Sunday we don't go to the woods with our families and walk all

afternoon, so we don't have that natural connection where our body would truly mourn if we didn't go for a walk. If you don't have a mountain to climb or a woods to walk in, you can stretch, love and honour your body through the yoga positions. That will change the depth of your dreaming, because you are into the depth of yourself.

CP *How do masculine and feminine energies work together?*

MW It's important to realize that we're in a lifetime process. If you're working with psychoanalysis, the inner guide will work with the feminine for a certain length of time. If your feminine is weak, you'll work with being yourself in your femininity. When that gets to a certain point of strength, you'll start having dreams about the masculine. You've got the snakes coming up, they meet and they cross, three and a half turns. So



the dream pattern follows that, because if your feminine isn't strong enough to contain the masculine, you just have to keep working until she is strong enough to contain it, or to be penetrated by it. You, from the ego position, have no power over what's going on.

CP So, then, Kundalini and the chakras point to a kind of balance within?

MW There's a magnificent balance going on: the feminine comes up, the masculine comes up, they're equally strong, they meet, they cross. Then the masculine may go up, and the feminine comes up, and again they will meet, and there's a wonderful coming together, rebalancing so that neither one has the strength to wipe out the other. Most people live in mother and daddy all their lives and the marriage is mother and daddy, and they have the same old fights that their mother and dad had. That's the unconscious doing its thing, and what we're working on is bringing that to consciousness in order for it to transform.

CP Does the "inner marriage" described by the alchemists require consciousness?

MW The marriage is what you're doing: you're working to open your masculine body and soul, to open your feminine body and soul, so they can come together. And then again. You go through that

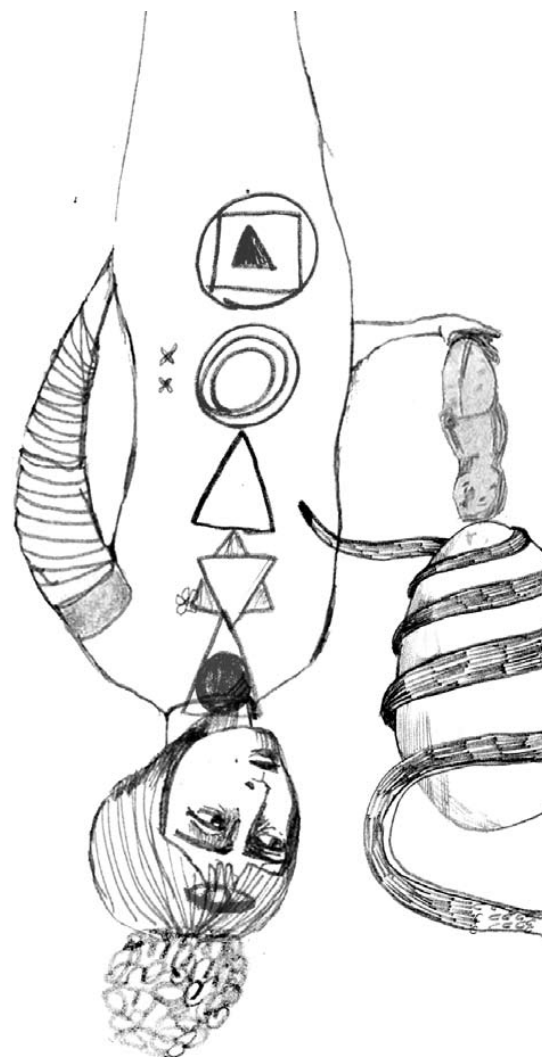
very difficult space and again you come together. It's three and a half turns.

CP In the symbolism of yoga, that's the number of turns the snake is coiled around the egg at the base of the spine!

MW That's how it works in the dream world. And it is a sacred path. I never get tired when I'm with someone on that path. You're being given archetypal energy when you're in that space. The spiritual energy is pouring in—the ego is taken out and the soul is pouring in. The snake is your snake. It is your life. Who am I in my soul? You find more and more of your own reality. Anything false is taken away; you recognize it's false and it will not do. That is what happens. You are trying to release the soul so that you are your "beingness." At each one of these stations where things change quite radically, you are called upon to adjust. Each time you are deepening the level of love, deepening both going up and going down, so it's just opening all the time right up to death. You are finding out about your beingness, because some things are you and other things are not.

CP Is this adventure different if you're a man or if you're a woman? Jung says that Kundalini is feminine, it's anima.

MW Whether you're a man or a woman, I would say that the soul is feminine and



the spirit is masculine. It has a penetration, a ferocity. It is archetypal energy that comes in so fast and so deep that you cannot deny it and your life is changed. It usually happens in a dream.

CP As in early psychology, the yogic texts have been written by men. Both psychology and yoga are male traditions. It always makes me wonder if we need a separate yoga for men and women. Is there a psychology for women and for men, or are they the same?

MW I would say that the ego is the same gender as your body. You need an ego. I know lots of people attracted



to the spiritual life who don't want to develop an ego, because they're not supposed to have an ego. The ego makes the decisions that allow you to be the individual that you were born to be on this earth. But you have to get the ego out of the road once in a while for two souls to come together, for great lovemaking, or for the moments of inner union. That's yoga as I understand it. There's no place for ego there.

CP *This makes me wonder about the inner union and how that manifests in or relates to the larger world, in our relationships with other people. You once described love as that which holds together the universe, suggesting something broader.*

MW And it holds together the individual in that universe—*uni* is one. There is a place in our journey where that human body that is carrying soul needs the archetypal just to waken her up. If you're on the path, it will happen. ☸

Artist, writer and architect **Christie Pearson** creates work amplifying our bodies' relation to our environments (www.christiepearson.ca). She co-curates the wade festival of installation and performance art (www.wadetoronto.com), produces sound events with THEWAVES (www.thewaves.ca) and is a member of the performance collective urbanvessel (www.urbanvessel.com).

Cristina Sitja Rubio studied printmaking and photography at Concordia University. She has a master's degree in photography from the San Francisco Art Institute. Two years ago, she moved to Berlin and began drawing. She lives a quiet life. www.memoriadistante.net

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