

Energy, Art, and the Tarot
By Mark Levy and Miriam Jacobs

“Only when we understand ourselves can we get along with ourselves and value the precious gift of life, given for the soul purpose of freeing our Soul and consciousness from the snares of the mind and senses, which are the real cause of our suffering and ill health”

Dr. Robert Stone, Founder of Polarity Therapy

The basis of our collaborative workshops is the realization that an understanding of the Tarot in conjunction with other archetypal systems of energy, including Polarity Therapy, Shamanism and Tantra/ Kundalini, can be a powerful vehicle to uncover the mechanisms that keep us bound in old patterns.

A senior professor at California State University, East Bay. Mark has been teaching art history for many years and is also a long time practitioner of shamanic techniques and Kundalini meditation which he teaches to a small group of advanced meditation students. Miriam an expert energy healer and teacher of Polarity Therapy, also has an extensive background in the visual arts.

Both of us realized that the history of art contains images whose meaning can readily be comprehended through the Tarot, and that the Tarot itself can be illuminated in relation to works of art. We also began to use the the Tarot in our spiritual and healing work.

As an energy healer, Miriam uses the Tarot as a tool to recognize and change thought patterns and reveal elemental blockages and physical afflictions in the body. While taking a shamanic journey for one of his students, Mark reached an impasse until he saw the Tarot image of the hanged man which enabled him to accurately predict the student's future. Indeed, many of the elements of the Tarot relate to the shamanic cosmology of the upper and lower world as well as the chakras and elements in both Polarity therapy and Kundalini meditation. For example, there is connection between the Tarot Cup cards, the heart chakra, the water element, the middle world in shamanism, and the physical condition of the breast, pelvis and feet areas.

Although Tarot developed during the Renaissance in Italy during the 15th century, its content is quite universal and by looking at comparisons between the Tarot with Eastern and Western art makes the extremely complex and sophisticated Tarot less intimidating and more relevant to everyday life.

We have found no better work in art history for the Tarot card of World than the Dancing Shiva which expresses the ability to dance through life with perfect equanimity.

We relate the Lovers card in the major arcana to the juicy lovers of Maithuna couples

in the art of India. The Emperor is a powerful establishment leader in the tarot who relates to the image of an Old Testament King on a stained glass image in a Gothic Church. The Magician tarot card is about skill, communication, and transmitting energy from above to below and thereby accomplishing all kinds of transformation as if by magic. Picasso's Harlequin with Raised Hands, 1905 is a Magician.

The Chariot card supports change and recognizing the necessity of getting one's "act together." Astrologically it is connected with Cancer and the crab's tenacious ability to withstand the tumult of life. In Odilon Redon painting of Apollo's Chariot(1915-1916), this god holds on for dear life in his wild ride through the cosmos.

The Hermit in the tarot reminds and supports us to seek solitude for spiritual enlightenment. Sometimes maintaining solitude can be extreme but it shows the discipline required for inner growth. In Sesshu's 15th C painting the Bodhidharma is not even distracted from his meditation by his successor- to- be Huike who has torn off his arm to attract the Bodhidharma's attention.

The suite of wands in the minor arcana relates to the fire element, dynamic activity, passion, and the need to be centered in the solar plexus in the midst of moving energies. The Five of Wands in the Rider-Waite deck shows 5 men with sticks who are engaged in some kind of struggle, Indeed, the number five itself can be visualized is a stable or unstable geometry . Our comparisons with the Waite card are Giotto's Kiss of Judas(1300) in the Arena Chapel in Padua and George Hayes, "A Fight With Bare Fists", 1860, which looks more like a game than an actual struggle for the the five of Wands may simply refer to being involved a powerful dance with others.

The magnificent Chalice from St. Denis 1200's is one symbol among many for the Ace of Cups. This card embraces the water element which is tied to emotions while the ace of one relates to new beginnings. While this card can mean the start of love for oneself or for another, it can also be associated with the emotional satisfaction at the start of a new enterprise, In the case of St. Denis, the chalice is connected with the wealth, comfort and security of the newly revitalized church of St. Denis that inaugurates the beginning of the Gothic period of French architecture.

In the court cards, there is the King of Cups, and we have a photograph of Elvis, the King, rocking out. Often the King of Cups refers to a powerful leader who can sway the emotions but it can also be related to a master artist who has the ability to engage and manipulate the emotions of an audience. Making references to images in popular culture, as well as the history of art is an amusing game that can go on forever, but it often pries loose unusual and unexpected meanings.

Since the Tarot is a lifelong study, both beginning and advanced students usually get something out of these comparisons. In our workshops we also include several interactive exercises with other energy systems to further build a foundation to understand the tarot. These exercises may include a numerological game, an understanding of the elements and their linkages to the physical body, shamanic journeys through the different worlds represented in the cards, awaking the subtle body system of chakras that are directly or indirectly embodied by the cards, and so forth. Our goals are to make interpretations of the tarot, an often daunting undertaking, easier and more accessible, to empower students to make their own interpretations of the tarot, to inspire artists to use images from the Tarot in their work, to see the unfolding of the archetypes found in the tarot in everyday life, and of course to have fun!

For more info on our upcoming class go to www.jfk.edu or www.polaritywellness.com/tarot