

**Picture Interpretation** Like Dream interpretation: Image Adapted to different elements of a picture

**a. Free association:** personal associations to the different motifs and symbols, like personal memories, feelings

tell personal associations to picture. What is triggered by looking, what story does it tell, where does the picture come in. Focus on picture not the riffs... avoiding prejudices or projections

**b. Amplifications:** focus on the archetypal level of the psyche— non-personal associations collected as hints of archetypal or transpersonal dimension, to maintain respectful attitude toward both the picture and its maker

### **Amplification of Material Aspects**

If **choice** is possible, the material is the first choice the author of a picture makes, this tell us something.

**a. Sheet Paper Choice:** Quality of cards:

The quality of the chosen sheet of paper reflects the value given to an image.

Low quality disvalues images, **OR** a reclamation of low value to high soul's symbolic expression

**b. Choice of Medium**

We first look at the **characteristics** of the different media and then make the step towards a **psychological statement**. Depends on context of picture looked at. Context emerges during the work of interpretation.

**PENCIL: Characteristics:** erasable, no color, huge varieties of possible nuances line shading

**Psychological interpretation:** either not yet committed to the content of the picture, avoiding color, control over emotions out of fear of a confrontation with the reality of the psychic background. **OR**, depending on the whole context, the medium pencil can also point to a concentration on the main features of what should be represented and a care for its precise shaping to create a picture as close as possible to an image from the inner world.

**INK Characteristics:** Unlike pencil, ink is not easy to correct. It is flowing, and the black-white allows fine nuances and moods to become visible, like on a black-and-white photograph.

**Psychological interpretation:** The author does not «confess any color». There can be a hard contrast between black and white. **OR** this can also point to a concentration on the main features of the theme paired with the courage to let the inner forces flow and to let things happen.

**COLORED PENCIL: Characteristics:** The picture becomes colorful, **OR** it can also be hard, brittle and dry. **OR**, this medium can also lead to very fine, intensively elaborated and differentiated picture.

**Psychological interpretation:** The picture is colorful and brings in the emotional background. **OR** it is still quite controlled. This can point to a careful presentation of something emotional **OR** it

can also point to ambivalence between «confessing color and controlling the emotion at the same time.

**FINGER PAINT Characteristics:** medium spontaneous. Differentiated coloring not easily possible. The fingers directly express in the picture.

**Psychological interpretation:** spontaneous expression of emotions, **OR** points to undifferentiated emotionality

**BALLPOINT PEN Characteristics:** The ballpoint pen common writing tool, practical and functional. It is good for making clear lines **OR** rather difficult to use for filling out space with color.

**Psychological interpretation:** point to a dry, sober, cold or even sloppy expression **OR** to a spontaneous, clear, matter-of-fact, down-to-earth, clearly determined expression.

**WATER COLOR Characteristics:** flowing, running often in a surprisingly unexpected way. difficult to correct and the background is strongly involved in the way the picture appears.

**Psychological interpretation:** allows nuances on the emotional level. open toward spontaneous happenings of objective psyche. **OR** mirror an undetermined attitude, characterized by dreaminess and a too-weak ego

**OIL PAINT Characteristics:** quite an effort preparation allows expression variety and, unlike with watercolor, correction is quite easy.

**Psychological interpretation:** may reflect a deep involvement with represented—only the very best is good enough, so to speak. **OR** an attitude that wants to control, hide, repress and censor with perfection.

**MIXTURE OF DIFFERENT MODES OF EXPRESSION Characteristics:** When we find, for instance, pencil and watercolor used together in a picture, we may understand such a combination of two media by amplification of each one of them and then by combining the two, again looking at the interpretation in two ways.

**Psychological interpretation:** The combination of pencil and watercolor may point to a disagreement or ambivalence between controlling (pencil) and letting things flow (watercolor). **OR** this combination to some special care that is given to the represented, complementary modes of the psyche.

### c. Frame

A **strong frame** order toward a fearful, rigid, confining attitude in the picture. **OR** a highly treasured object framed, something needing strong protection.

Complete **lack of a frame** reveals an overwhelming by content not contained in a frame. Notice when motifs are cut by the edge of the paper. **OR** that ego consciousness no longer structures as center in picture creation, suggesting weak ego **OR** worse, a schizoid structure. **OR** for now represented content is too huge and numinous to be accept by conscious frame of the author.

### d. Format

*Large-sized picture* = great importance and value of represented. **OR** as expression, tendency toward grandiosity, exaggeration or hubris.

**OR**

*Small size* = contemptuous, fearful, modest attitude towards emergence from dream and fantasy. **OR** = intensity precious delicacy.

**OR**

*Series of pictures with size change* = an unsteady, restless ambivalent person, **like** swinging between grandiosity and inferiority moods, **OR** mirrors to focus, enlarge one's view aspects, to see clearer **OR** not to lose sight of the greater context.

The difference between a *portrait format* or a *landscape format* a valuable criterion We can understand these two formats in their archetypal meaning, if we consider that they both deviate in a certain way from the square.

**Square** = balanced order between any type of opposites (as horizontal **OR** vertical lines): body and spirit, earth and sky, time and space, etc. square = static order of two formats that move into one or the other opposing direction.

**Portrait format:** vertical striving for spiritualization **OR** greater depth, [above, below] that search to distill meaning in a concrete situation. **OR** flight, escape from imminent reality, facts to lose contact with ground.

**Landscape formal:** = the grounded, horizon. earth Mother nurturance **OR** earth mother where horizontal dominates vertical = ego-consciousness as uppermost, a loss of height, transcendence.

**Change from portrait to landscape** = change of attitude or to a new quality of the content: understood as either a transformation from spiritual towards the represented content to a realization in the here and now. **OR** as loss of a more spiritual attitude and an entanglement in concretization.

**OR**

**Change from landscape to portrait** = more symbolic, spiritual attitude towards concrete situation or motive; **OR** could mirror an attempt to get away from the facts of the reality of life that seem now too difficult to deal with.

### 3.3. Formal Aspects

#### a. Organization

Organization, order is the opposite pole to chaos. There are two ways of ordering things:

One =constellation in the unconscious **OR** the other is not in accordance with it.

*Different elements can bring order to a picture*, like symmetries, central perspective and grids. According to the relationship of the order-giving elements with the other elements of the picture, we can figure out whether the given order is, or is not, in accordance with the unconscious.

### **ORDER IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE UNCONSCIOUS**

order = coherent and adequate, as elements seem properly interrelated to each other, Order mirrors ego that does not need to defend itself by excluding something unacceptable from the inner world. **OR**

an organization in a picture can also be a compensation from the unconscious for a chaotic state existing at the conscious level.

**Example** mandala (Sanskrit: circle) protects the individual personality. Like a magic charm by which the unconscious suggests a new conscious attitude that is again in tune with the wholeness of the psychic background. The first forms of mandalas already appear in children's paintings relating to the birth of individual consciousness.

### **ORDER NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE UNCONSCIOUS**

order = structure of a picture gives impression of rigid order as fear, obsession or compulsion. Looks stiff, tight, rigid, and controlling. Fences, nets, grids = fear coming from an autonomous content.

rigid order mirrors ego-consciousness that points toward need for renewal of the general attitude of the ego, **OR** this sort of order can also mirror a legitimate, life-saving control against some overwhelming unconscious content.

### **LITTLE OR NO ORGANIZATION**

= a «letting go of ego control» at the time when an entry into the depth of the unconscious is taking place. **OR** a lack of a solid ego, where the mixture of the opposites is dominant. This can go so far as to be an overflow from the unconscious with a danger of dissociation.

Chaos and order both emerge from the unconscious.

#### **b. Proportion**

Proportion = energy lies, how things are related to each other. We can see that in a simple and clear way when we look at architecture. **Size** In former times, the church, temple or mosque used to be the tallest building in a settlement. That has now changed, minorizing the general, secularization of our time

Big = important **OR** what irritates or frightens. Proportion **Example** tree test: how is space used? **OR** points to concentrate energy of the tree **OR** it is 'soil' where the tree can grow now

#### **c. Movement**

movement in a picture= strong energy flows. Movement expresses emotion. Lines, forms, motifs or colors can indicate movement. Movement points to the future

movement from right-to- left side of the picture points toward either towards introversion to retrieve things lost in the past **OR** to a regression that leads to a getting stuck in resentment.

**OR**

Left-to-right movement points to a flow and development in the outer world **OR** to a thoughtless, meaningless extraversion

The movement in a picture gives us prognostic hints:

In which direction does the energy flow? **OR** What could the next step in the process?

Clockwise movement: points to the consolidation of a center **OR** a progression in consciousness. The sacred. The clean.

Counter-clockwise movement: around a center, left hand towards the center. = the regeneration of a central divine image that is no longer visible or living. This counter-clockwise movement is thus turning towards the unconscious, to death and resurrection and to the creation of a new symbol. **OR** this movement points to danger of being lost in the abyss of the unconscious, being unable to find the redeeming centering symbol.

### **3.4. Space Symbolism**

#### **a. The Quality of Location**

Space symbolism is based on collective human experience and is empirical. An empty sheet is never just an empty space. It is immediately conditioned by our perception, filled with our archetypal experience.

**space.** The left side is related to the sinister, the dark side and the past, **OR** the right side is connected to the bright side and the future. In the same way the upper part is connected to elevation, spirit and growing-up, while the bottom is connected to ground, roots and grounding.

The **left--right symbolism:** the movement from left to right connected to universal development in people. the sun and all `sky-bodies' travel from the left to the right, due to the rotation of the earth.

**OR** we all experience **growth** on earth connected to «growing up», that is from **down below upwards**. This provides the basis for understanding the archetypal dimension of space symbolism.

**Apply space symbolism** take a horizontal or—if more appropriate to the specific character of the picture—a diagonal grid on to the picture. The shaded areas show the parts of the sheet that relatively represent the unconscious part of the psyche. The two grids placed above each other show the archetypal «brightest and darkest parts» of a sheet. **Diagonal horizontal and Diagonal vertical**

#### **Which sides active and passive?**

Inverting a picture can show the importance of a space symbolism. give examples

#### **b. Perspective**

Perspective tells us how we see what is represented.

*In ancient Egyptian paintings* **aspective**, meaning front view of the important aspects. For instance, the eye is represented in front view, being a side one. What is considered important is represented in its most powerful and clear appearance.

*from ancient Greek and Roman times paintings*, elements in simple **juxtaposition**, one next to another. *the Middle Ages*, when **perspective** was mainly given by **color** and **light**.

*Renaissance* did the **central perspective** meaning “new discovery of the human dimension on earth”, where human beings were stating: «This is the way I see that scene». strengthening of the ego.

*In modern times*, Cubism again dissolves all perspective, mirroring the **relativity of the human ego**  
change of perspective reflects a change of worldview:

*When in a picture series* a development of central perspective becomes apparent, this can point to the *strengthening of the ego-complex* that allows a further encounter with the unconscious. **OR** mirror a growing control of what is represented.

*Decrease in perspective* in a series of pictures can point to a loosening of ego-control with a readiness to accept whatever new comes from the inner world. In this way the ego is no longer defined by exclusion. **OR** also mirror dissolution of the ability to order what is represented in the picture.

*Light perspective* can mirror an ego too weak to hold the tension of the opposites **OR** a state where the foreground and the background are not divided by a defined perspective, giving a possibility for the appearance of a reconciling symbol.

*Central and linear perspective* as constructed. easier for the thinking function to cope with this sort of perspective. It was well developed at the time of the Renaissance. It points to a good sense of reality **OR** being bogged down in the concrete.

*Incoherence of the perspective*, something like a tectonic rupture. That can point to a borderline or a psychotic structure **OR** to a deep inner psychic inconsistency.

*No perspective* in a picture can point to a lack of depth of shadow side of life, of one's own ego-consciousness **OR** an abstraction from the three-dimensional reality to come to the essence of things, ie a mandala.

How does space symbolism can contribute to the understanding of a picture?

If we focus on the space symbolism and the perspective, the image illustrates the unsolvable conflict in the foreground: the ego heroically tries to fight the snakes that would be the frightening aspects coming from the unconscious. But there is a clear perspective or way out of the unsolvable conflict: why not just move around the snakes «on the natural development Une»? This development of consciousness led the man finally to life, marriage and unexpected creativity that brought a reconciliation of his bewildering snake-world with his quest for meaning.

