

# Art Yourself Alive by Vikki Parker

A Mental Health & Trauma Recovery Case Study of Lived Experience

I am a survivor.

I have a deep belief in spiritual connection.

I believe I chose my soul contract and the family I was born into.

I am at peace with the lessons I came to learn.

It is these lessons that I survived.

I survived because I embraced my creative self, when that is all I had.

This is my story....

Imagine knowing you have a glow within you, a deep warmth, a clarity of worth. Intrinsic worth. Now imagine the ingredients necessary to inform the creation of a black box around that glow. An impenetrable blackness. A death of sorts. A hiding. A waiting.

Picture a mother, in such deep wounding of her own, depressed, suicidal, over-medicated, co-dependent and a master at emotional blackmail. On a backdrop of ancestral feminine wounding.

Picture a father, in such fractured wounding of his own, narcissistic, sociopathic, gaslighting, emotional incest, a master of control and manipulation. On a backdrop of patriarchal permission.

Picture a girl, in such shocked awareness that her existence was not safe, where her beauty was coveted and raged upon, her sexuality was bound by enforced loyalty, her true voice silenced yet her talents revered in public but torn down in private. A chaos of confusing, shifting goalposts, a threat of abandonment and an innocence stolen. She became a master at watching, for danger, for clues to unpick the deathly silences. A destroyed trust in relationships. A gripped self, halted in time, waiting for a moment to emerge as herself. On a backdrop of cosmic connection.

Is this girl medicated, still traumatised, hospitalised or failing to thrive? No, she is not. Why is that? Because she found the spaces to tell her truth, over and over, anonymously, in all its intensity, safely held, in the Arts.

At 3 years old, just at the time the first betrayal occurred, and she saw her mother terrorised, she began to dance. Ballet gave her the grace to move through the swamp. She went on to train in more styles, specifically contemporary dance where she claimed her body for herself.

Throughout her childhood she wrote stories of fairy tales and monsters and wicked queens and charming princes. It gave her the space to escape to magic, because no one can survive some aspects of reality alone.

In her friend, the dissociated state, with her fragmented self, she played out all the characters warring within her through her lifelong commitment to theatre. This 10-year-old girl, using the stage to cathart her pain. She went on to play many roles where the voice of every persona gave her access to relief and a knowing that she was more than just one stuck personality weathering the storms of relentless fear.

And she drew. Her fascination with metallic objects absorbed her focus for hours and hours, allowing the detailed pencil work to reach deeply into her own reflections.

And this girl, who danced and twirled and acted and sang and shone on many stages, rehearsed the possible in all ways and waited for her chance to tell the truth with her own voice. In her own words. Without anonymity.

And it took decades.

And the thing about art is that we can create it, and in the witnessing, we join the audience in observing the fire whilst protecting ourselves from the burn.

Our story is held, in all its nuance.

Our truth is explored, validated, celebrated, and seen by ourselves and others.

This girl is me.

A teacher of drama for 16 years in education. A seeker of truth educated in psychology & integrative arts psychotherapy. An energy healer and lover of ritual, circle, divine connection, and dogs; the gift to the world of unconditional love.

For many years I acted and directed and kept my visual art secret. The performance self, the double-edged sword of visibility and anonymity, was my identity. I truly believe that theatre prevented the development of dissociative identity disorder. I wrote a one-woman show called 'Voice' for Brighton Fringe in 2017. I openly performed the split parts of my Self from a space of meta-awareness, a higher aspect of me that was whole and holding it all. In doing this I consciously confronted the main family threat that I would be annihilated if I told the truth. I dared to tell it, held by the words of my script, the Blues songs I sang and the abstract movement I choreographed. It was an enquiry into the fragments of my story, held in spaces in my nervous system, each part given a voice even where there were no words. A multi-disciplinary approach to honour the essence of it all.

No-one annihilated me. I was seen and heard. It was full embodiment of truth, and it caused such a deep energetic shift within me that I developed labyrinthitis (inner ear imbalance) for the duration of the shows. I did not expect the rage that followed. The rage at revealing the lie that had held me gripped in my inner world and reinforced the black box, was palpable. It led me on a journey to meet my own internal annihilator.

On August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017, I contemplated suicide. I considered my deservedness to live. I had so often been told that I didn't deserve it. I reflected on my deep journey of expressing my truth, in all the ways I had done, all the secrets in the strokes of a brush, the ferocity of feeling in the gesture of a character and there I was. Not hiding anymore. It was truly a profound moment on Brighton beach when I chose to stay. On my terms. I was guided by my higher self, my heart, my creative fire, and my anger at nearly carrying out 'their' dirty work for them. It was a line in the sand. I had a right to be here, free and expressed. That was a now non-negotiable. I was 48 years old.



In 2019, after many years of therapy and somatic trauma healing, I began to draw again. This time intuitively. The delicacy, movement, fluidity, and expansive essence of the drawings came through me onto the page. A pencil portal of higher consciousness and a journey into reclaiming the fragmented parts of my trauma self. This meditation practice became my daily medicine. It allowed me to speak into aspects of myself that had been dispersed to survive. Being whole and embodied had been a dangerous space to be. Attempting that during the trauma would have resulted in a psychotic break. In the drawings, called SourceDoodles, I have begun the journey home to my body. To date there are 136 pencil drawings that look like 'little souls dancing'. From them I have developed three collections of digital images that seem to explore the themes of Divine Feminine Wounding (The Goddesses Emerge), Unity Consciousness (Remember Love?) & Trauma Healing (No Longer on Fire). They are sacred work and as I sit with them, they sing their song through me in mantra, poetry, love letters, soundscapes, and movement.

*Digital Image - 'Dancing the Universe' by Vikki Parker – From The Goddesses Emerge Collection.*

My journey with acrylic painting has flourished in the last year, with all the colours seeking expression on large canvasses. I am currently working on a collection allowing the delicacy of pencil work to transform into wild abandon and unmistakable, unapologetic presence.

The embodied experience of painting BIG takes me to another edge of permission. It's a shock to the system to make mess, throw paint, destroy, and repair. It's a new level of joy and celebration of life and possibility beyond old restrictions.

This girl has opened the black box that imprisoned her glow and through her artistic expression has given herself the life and light back that was once threatened.



*Image – 'Curious Portals' by Vikki Parker – 100cm x 100cm Acrylic on Canvas*

The creation of Doodle Café as a space for others to pause, reflect and connect with the wisdom of their creative self has become my work. It's a bringing together of people in the magic of intuitive doodling fused with the wisdom of ritual, intention, sharing and letting go of the thinking mind. It's a space to rehearse their own possibilities of freedom from a grip within them that is blocking them from fully living. Harnessing the spontaneity and freedom of doodling with gentle permissions to face the unknown in the symbolism of the blank page. A gentle, compassionate return to inner child joy with grown-up wisdom.

My podcast, Art Yourself Alive, is a celebration of honest voices speaking their truth and advocating for creativity as the tool that also saved them. I share lived experience stories of how the Arts can connect you with deeper levels of aliveness within you. This is part of my commitment to my role as the Southeast Champion for the Lived Experience Network (LENS).

My vision for humanity is one of truth-telling with grace and compassion, where every story of death and rebirth of the self is held with such reverence that no one will ever need to thwart their own life force again in fear of the potency of their truth. I want to continue to hold spaces for others to find their creative flow and celebrate who they are.

Art is Medicine.  
For the Soul.  
For the heart.

For the collective transformation of old wounding and the glorious potential of beings incarnate.

*'We have art so that we do not die of reality'* Nietzsche

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## Links to my work

- Website – Artist - [www.vikkiparker.com](http://www.vikkiparker.com)
- Website – Arts in Health Practitioner - [www.artyourselfalive.com](http://www.artyourselfalive.com)
- Podcast - [www.artyourselfalive.podbean.com](http://www.artyourselfalive.podbean.com)
- Professional Profile - [www.linkedin.com/in/vikkiparker/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/vikkiparker/)
- Visual Diary of Daily Inspiration - [www.instagram.com/artwisdom](http://www.instagram.com/artwisdom)