

Chapter 4

College Life (September 2005 – March 2006)

"The most important thing is to enjoy your life – to be happy – it's all that matters." - Audrey Hepburn

Living in Paradise

Gung, a student from Chengdu, often described Emerson College as a paradise, away from urban clutter. He had resigned from his job as an accountant in China and came to be in 'paradise'. We often had philosophical conversations about the world we were living in, and the outside world. With the college situated in the beautiful English countryside, we were embraced by Mother Nature which gave us a sense of peace and serenity, free from the political turmoil and family feuds of the outside world. It was a lovely fairy-tale like and safe place to live in. Nurtured by words of encouragement from friendly tutors, and free of pressure to compete with classmates and to attain good grades, we need only to focus on our own learning.

Without a television on the campus, we only got to know about the world's happenings mainly through the internet which could be accessed in the college's computer room, where about half a dozen computers were shared by all the students.

Well, Gung left the paradise and went to do a master's degree in finance at the University of Cardiff after having spent two years at Emerson. After graduating, he returned to his hometown Chengdu and became the finance manager of the Waldorf School set up by Harry Wong whom I mentioned in Chapter 1.

Community Living

In this paradise, how did I find living with strangers under the same roof? Sharing a house with students of different nationalities and ages was indeed an enriching experience.

Each house had a 'house-mother', a role assigned to one of the students living in it by Judith, the College House Manager. This person had to ensure that the residents kept the living space clean and tidy, and adhered to its rules. We each had a space in the fridge and a cabinet shelf to store foodstuff in the communal kitchen. The college provided the cooking utensils and cutlery in each house and we had to ensure that they were cleaned after our use. Over time, the cooking times were sorted amongst the housemates to avoid congestion in the kitchen. Each of us had a responsibility such as cleaning the kitchen or bathrooms, tidying the common area or emptying the garbage bin. As the kitchen was an enormous space, it required two or three persons to keep it tidy and orderly. We had to change our bedlinen ourselves fortnightly, and to bring the dirty linen to the main laundrette at Pixton House.

In Pinetree, the first house I lived in, there were only three rooms – one single and two double. I socialised more with the young Taiwanese couple as the other couple stayed for only one term for the story-telling course. Chun Ding and I-chi were rather disappointed when I left them in the final term of the first year to move to Oaktree House, a house with ten rooms for more mature or, in other words, older students. I asked for the change of accommodation as I found the room in Pinetree rather small – in fact it was the smallest room on the whole campus. After a year, I asked for another change, prompted by Shao Hung a Taiwanese student who asked me to apply for accommodation in Westwood House. She wanted to stay in the same house with me and being younger, her chances of getting a room in Oaktree was slim. Our joint applications for Westwood House would stand a better chance of success.

We did get into Westwood at the start of my final year. This house, mainly for young students in their early twenties, had a very vibrant atmosphere with parties held regularly in the huge kitchen, big enough for over twenty residents who mostly self-catered. After Shao Hung left for Taiwan in the second term as her mother was ill and subsequently passed away, I applied for another change of house. This time a return to Oaktree as I believed a quieter place with less distractions would be better for me in my final term. Fortunately, a twin room had just been vacated, enabling me to move back to a more serene setting and a bigger room which was a bonus. The fourth house I lived was Linden during the two summers when I worked as a volunteer in the college.

Social Life

There was an abundance of social activities making it difficult to live like a hermit in the college. Fortnightly, a performance by students on the story telling course was open to all, free of charge. Evening entertainments included talks and musical performances by college staff, students and invited guests. These were occasions when those on different courses interacted with one another, not to mention the two coffee and tea breaks from Monday to Friday during term time.

On most Saturdays and Sundays, except when weekend courses were held, students living on campus enjoyed the peace and quiet of the college grounds, free from the hustle and bustle of the weekdays. This was the time when small group gatherings took place amongst us.



A pot-luck meal gathering

As birds of a feather always flock together, I joined a group comprising students from Mainland China and Taiwan. The only 'Ang-mo' or Caucasian in the Chinese group was David, a member of the college maintenance staff and partner of Gloria, a Taiwanese who was an ex-student of Emerson. We met regularly for 'pot-luck' meals. During the warm weather, we would gather in the lovely gardens or else at David's house on the campus which was always a favourite meeting venue.

Many Chinese Festivals, aside from the Lunar New Year, are not observed in modern Singapore nowadays. But the students from Mainland China and Taiwan must have missed the celebrations back in their home countries as they organised parties around these festivals. Attending such gatherings brought back memories

of my childhood days when my family used to celebrate these festivals too. My foster mother often related to me stories of the legends behind the different festivities.

The Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as the Moon Cake Festival, falls on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month when the moon is full. Full moon symbolizes reunion, harmony, and happiness, when families and friends gather to enjoy one another's company. In Singapore, the significance of the festival has been lost in the tsunami of competitive promotions of various kinds of moon cakes by hotels, restaurants, and bakeries. Waves of new recipes keep rolling on the consumers each year. At Emerson moon cake was not on the menu at all when the Chinese group gathered to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival. We simply chatted and munched titbits.

Another festival the group celebrated was the Duan Wu or Rice Dumpling. Occurring on the 5th day of the sixth lunar month, this event is perhaps better known in Singapore as the Dragon Boat Festival. This was the date Qu Yuan, a patriotic poet and an advisor to the king of the Chu Kingdom during the Warring States Period, committed suicide by jumping into the Miluo River on hearing the news that Chu was conquered by another kingdom. The locals rowed out to search for his body, and failing to find it, they threw lumps of rice into the river to feed the fish so that they would not eat Qu Yuan's body. Hence, the birth of sticky rice dumplings and dragon boat racings.

International Evening

An interesting annual event was the International Evening where students dressed in their national attire intermingled and partook a great variety of food. This international buffet dinner, prepared by the students themselves, was a gastronomical delight. The buffet was followed by a nearly three-hour show staged in Ruskin Hall. It was an extravaganza, with performances contributed on a voluntary basis by over twenty nationalities.

I participated in both the International Evening performances during my stay. In the first year, I gave a solo display of the 24-step Taiji movement, and in the second year, the Chinese group displayed a sword 'dance' after I gave four of the

Chinese students a crash course of the sword movements. After the word spread that I had been a Taiji instructor in Singapore, I received requests from many students to give them lessons. So, I started weekly lessons on the 24-step movement, free of charge. Only a few Asian and one English student, Peter, stayed with me to complete the whole sequence of steps. Many found the movements too complicated and could not catch up when they missed lessons due to other commitments.



Group meditation

After meeting Ingeranne during the two weekend workshops in the first year, we became friends. I joined the meditation group she and her husband Graham started in their house in Forest Row. As she had very young children, we could only do meditation at her place after 9pm at night when the kids were in bed. On some weekends, we went for a picnic together. This social activity terminated when she moved back to Norway before the end of my second year in the college.



Maiko

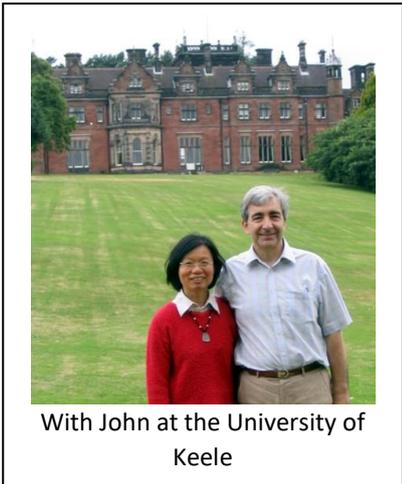
Maiko, my classmate for two years, deserves some mention here as she was so helpful and warm. When I first stepped into Emerson, this young Japanese girl in

her mid-twenties who had completed a formal art course in Tokyo, had already been in the college for three years. Having done the Spirit of English, Foundation in Education followed by the Visual Arts course, she was enrolled in the Education course while I was in my first year. She was well liked by all the tutors who taught her and was being groomed to be an assistant house manager to help Judith. Maiko became my classmate in my second year in the Sculpture Course while her boyfriend Michitaka left for Eurythmy training in Stonehouse, Gloucestershire. Being the only two Asian students on the course, Maiko and I got along well and were roommates on most of our overseas trips. She stayed in Westwood House and was the housemother while I was there. In the final year, our studios were next to one another, and we shared the ups and downs in our pursuit of creativity.



With Maiko

Visiting friends in the UK



With John at the University of Keele

Soon after my summer work in 2005 ended, I decided to visit two friends in the UK - John Chapman and Dorothy Senior. John had been a lecturer at the National University of Singapore in the early 1980s. After his return to England, we had maintained contact on and off through emails. He lived with his wife, Jane and their two young

daughters in Newcastle-under-Lyme, a short distance from the University of Keele where he worked. My last encounter with him was in Cambridge in 1993



With Dorothy, taken just before she left Emerson College in December 2003

when my foster father and I visited him during our holiday in England.

My friendship with Dorothy started in September 2003 when she was on the first term of the Visual Arts Course, and we got along very well. The reason for her premature departure from Emerson was that she missed her husband in Edinburgh.

I combined the two visits within one trip. First, I went to John's place by National Express Coach, stayed in his house for a couple of days and then went on northwards to Edinburgh to spend three days with Dorothy and her husband Colin. Besides having a good time catching up with friends, I had the luxury of sleeping in spacious bedrooms in their enormous houses compared to my tiny student room in the college. This trip gave me a refreshing break before I started on my final year of the sculpture course in mid-September.

Granite Stone Carving

Rudolf threw us a big surprise on the first day of the term. We were going to Norway in October to create sculptures using granite! He and Claudia had been planning this programme during the summer, without breathing a word about it to us. Usually, we would be informed of upcoming overseas trips well in advance as we needed to be prepared financially. This was completely unexpected.

The trip was organised with the help of Lisa, a Norwegian lady who lived in Forest Row and had been a part-time student on my first-year visual arts course. She had arranged for us to get stones free of charge from a Larvikite quarry not far from Oslo. Larvikite Granite, also known as Blue Pearl Granite, formed by volcanic activity hundreds of millions of years ago, is an exclusive natural stone used commercially for ornaments and decorative objects.

We were all very excited about this new development to stay in Norway for about five weeks. The first thing we had to do was to book our flights to Oslo individually. Fortunately, we were able to get cheap flights from London Stansted Airport on Ryanair, a budget airline. Our accommodation would be in a Camphill village in Vidarasen about 90 minutes' drive from Oslo. Camphill communities

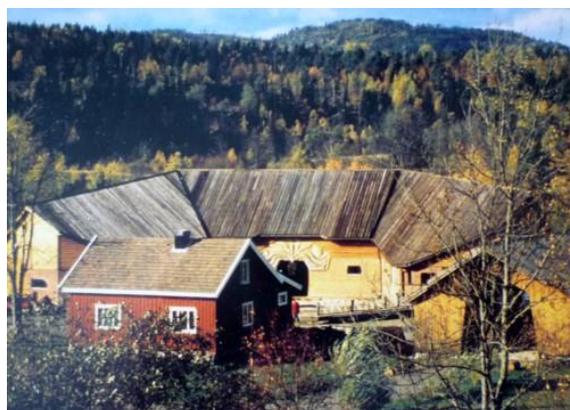
were founded based on Rudolf Steiner’s anthroposophy to help people with mental disabilities by allowing them to find expression through various art and craft activities and providing them with a social life. The first Camphill community was established just outside Aberdeen in Scotland in 1940, and the movement has since grown world-wide.

Our stay in Vidarasen

The multicultural community in Vidarasen had several houses accommodating adults with special needs and their families. Meals were prepared for the residents from organically or biodynamically grown vegetables in the community gardens. Craft and art workshops and social events were organised regularly for them. Volunteers and workers from different cultures were employed in the gardens, kitchens and the art studio. There were in fact a couple of youngsters from Japan working there during our stay. A van ran on a fixed schedule each week to transport the residents to a nearby town to enjoy the shops and cafes there.

A whole guest house with a fully equipped kitchen was made available to us and Claudia throughout our stay in Vidarasen. We prepared our own breakfast and sandwich lunches, and dinner was a more civilised sit-down affair partaking meals prepared by us in rotation. We could pick fresh vegetables from the community gardens for our meal preparation and were also invited to participate in the evening social events organised for the Camphill residents, making us feel that we were part of the community. Incidentally, a large group of Japanese social workers and students from Okinawa visited Vidarasen during our stay. Maiko was over the moon as she made friends with them, chatting happily in Japanese.

To me, the place was a peaceful, charming resort. Nevertheless, we must not forget that our aim was to do stone carving. The next day



Vidarasen Camphill Community

after our arrival in Norway we were at the granite quarry to select our stones. I chose one which measured about 90 by 65 by 30 cm. It was really going to be a test of our will power to create a sculpture in granite, a very hard stone, by hand with only a hammer and a tungsten carbide tipped chisel which each of us had had to buy. We also had to wear gloves and goggles to protect our eyes from stone chippings.



From left to right, front row: Maiko, Runa
 Second row: Claudia, Nike, Arndis (behind the stone), me
 Back row: Anette and David
 (missing course mates: Jeff and Lucia)

We had no pre-conceived idea of the resultant form, but just had to sense which parts of the stone needed to be chiselled off. A 9-to-5 challenge it was, to carve on the granite placed on a few wooden pallets stacked together at a comfortable height for us. At the end of each day, I looked at the form. It had hardly changed its shape at all! I felt frustrated with my slow progress, my limited physical strength and the

fact that I had to rely on my male classmates to turn the stone for me whenever I wanted to chisel on its underside. The estimated weight of the stone was 250 kg.

Fortunately, Sunday was our day of rest when our aching arms and sore hands could have a breather. Every night I had to rub ointment on my left hand which held the chisel, as the hammer would occasionally hit it accidentally instead. It was optional to work on Saturday. Many of us did as we found that four weeks was hardly enough time to complete the sculpture. One Saturday I decided to visit Ingeranne



Recognised me in my attire?

who had moved from Forest Row to Oslo. She was living with her three children, having separated from her husband who flew to Oslo from England fortnightly to see them. On another weekend, Claudia arranged a trip for all of us to view Edvard Munch's paintings and a Viking ship in a museum in Oslo.

One day, Ken suddenly appeared in our house in Vidarasen with a cake. Perhaps reports from Claudia indicated to the tutors back in Emerson that we needed something to perk us up! He stayed with us for a few days.

Finally came the day when we had to pack up our tools and declare that our works were completed. Patience and perseverance – these were qualities we had acquired. All the students' sculptures were shipped to England. Before returning to Emerson, we had a few relaxing days with Claudia, looking at Stave churches, glaciers, and the fjords

Back in Emerson College



A few weeks after our return to Emerson, the granite sculptures arrived at Dover. Ken went to pick them up using a truck and crane borrowed from a local farmer. Our creative works were displayed in various locations within the college grounds. We had to present to the staff and the rest of the students our experiences of carving granite. It was only then that we had to start thinking about a title for our artworks. The

name I adopted for my 80cm tall form was 'Awakening in Silence'. Strangely, I still remember my classmate Arndis's comment on my form. Although it had a strong front, she said, 'there was a child at the back'.

After the excitement of the Norwegian experience, it was time for us all to get back to our lesson routine. We had Rudolf taking us on the subject on Metamorphosis, based on Rudolf Steiner's representation of the evolutionary phases of planet Earth. The phases are named Saturn, Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus. First, Rudolf gave us a description of the qualities of each of

the seven planets and we were to create seven forms in clay demonstrating these different qualities. It was a challenge for most of us. The first two forms came very quickly for me, but the rest emerged rather slowly.

Planet	Qualities
<i>Saturn</i> marks the beginning – a situation that waits for something to happen.	patience, slowness, contemplating, endurance
<i>Sun</i> emits heat and light, and with warmth things become more fluid.	Magnanimity, warmth, energy, movement
<i>Moon</i> relates to our emotional realm	Inward turning, reflection
<i>Mars</i> – creative force that brings changes	Strength, decision, will, courage
<i>Mercury</i> always on the move and explore new possibilities, dislikes stability and symmetry	Quickness, liveliness, chaos
<i>Jupiter</i> relates to future, looking for meaning	Expansion, abundance, wisdom
<i>Venus</i> represents love, beauty and harmony	Caring, balance, listening, understanding

In the process of making these seven forms, the spherical shape appeared in my works yet again. Rudolf remembered that the sphere surfaced in quite a few of my models when he taught us clay modelling in the first year. Yes, I too recalled that it emerged in my second year’s sculpture works as well.



My metamorphosis forms

More part-time jobs

At the beginning of the third year, I took on three additional jobs - two in Forest Row and a weekend three-hour cleaning task in the college. One of the jobs in Forest Row was fortnightly house cleaning for a Turkish lady. The other was a waitress job working from 7 to 10pm on Saturdays and Sundays in a Chinese Restaurant run by a couple from Hong Kong. Waitressing was interesting as I got to meet different people at the weekends. A good memory was required as I had to remember a tables number and its positions so that the dishes were served correctly, as the numbers were not displayed on them.

During the two Christmas breaks in 2004 and 2005, I also saved some money by accepting requests to do house/cat sitting jobs in Forest Row for residents who were away on holiday. These jobs were not paid but it helped my finances by me not having to foot my accommodation bill in the college for a couple of weeks. The accommodation rate if I remember correctly was £60 per week and the exchange rate at that time was £1 to approximately S\$3.10.

Sometimes I did wonder. Why did I give up a well-paid lecturing position in Singapore and do all these jobs in England? Was my decision to quit Singapore a sensible move? On the other hand, I felt happier than in Singapore. Lots of people in the world are in search of happiness. Shouldn't I be glad that I was leading a much happier life even though my hourly pay was just five sterling pounds?

Christmas Break 2005

This Christmas break was a particularly busy time for me as I came upon another job accidentally. A Beijing student in Emerson who had agreed to do this job suddenly decided to quit her study just before Christmas. She recommended me to take her place. The work, which lasted from the day before Christmas Eve to New Year's Day whilst the regular helper was away on holiday, involved juicing and cooking for a lady. She had started on Gerson Therapy a few years earlier when she was given only a few months to live because of liver failure. The Gerson diet, an alternative for cancer patients who prefer not to have chemotherapy,

worked for her. Her house happened to be a stone's throw away from where I was cat-sitting in Forest Row. And as it involved only working in the morning, it suited me well.

It was quite an elaborate job as first I had to learn how to use the special juicer to crush either organic fruits or leafy vegetables to make a glass of juice. She had to consume one glass of raw juice hourly during the day. The Gerson Therapy treatment involves a strictly saltless, organic fruit and vegetable diet. Her food could not be cooked at high heat. I had to simmer the soup slowly at low temperature. If she wanted baked potatoes for lunch, the oven's temperature was not supposed to be above 100 degrees C, meaning the potatoes had to be in the oven for hours.

Sadly, I received the news of the passing of my ex-colleague, Jennifer Whitworth, on 22 December 2005. However, the Christmas jobs prevented me from attending her funeral. Our paths had crossed when Jennifer worked at the Centre for Computer Studies (CCS) in Ngee Polytechnic for the three years, 1982-85. And our last meeting was in 1993 when I visited Staffordshire University while on a study trip to the United Kingdom, sponsored by CCS. She was a principal lecturer there and had organised my visit to the university. While I was at Emerson, she was living in South Wales with her husband, David, who cared for her full-time after she had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease,

A few friends from Singapore came to Emerson on the last day of 2005. Pamela, another colleague from Ngee Ann Polytechnic, was on a European holiday tour with her family (husband Warren and three sons) and another friend, Stephanie. I had arranged for them to stay for a couple of nights at the guest rooms in Pixton House. I could not spend much time with them as I was doing cat sitting and juicing till New Year's Day but did manage to show them around the college and had a home-cooked meal in the kitchen of Westwood House.

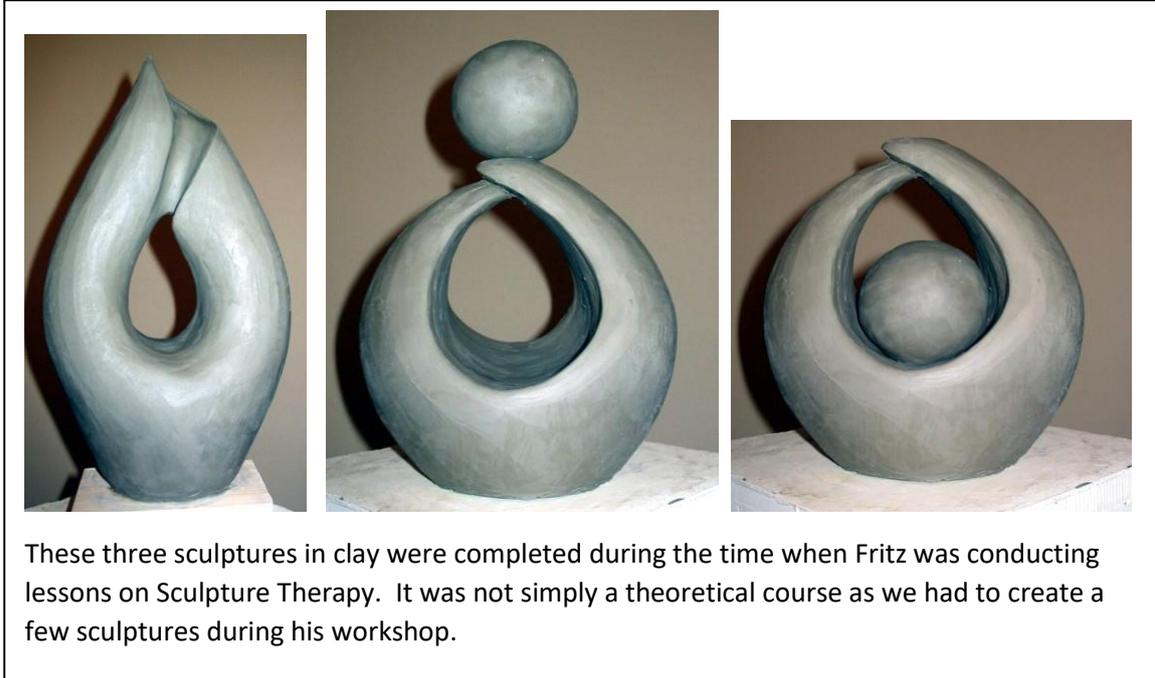


Sculpture Therapy

The second term of my final year after the Christmas Break brought a guest tutor from Switzerland, Fritz Marble, to give us an introduction to sculpture therapy. In the three-week workshop, Fritz highlighted to us that all sick people had healthy parts in them that could be used in the self-healing process. The sculpture therapy process starts by letting the patient create a piece of sculpture with clay. This first piece represents the problem. The patient has a free hand in creating the form, no instruction is to be given on its structure or its size. Fritz showed us slides of the various 'problem' sculpture forms made by his clients. He also presented to us pictures of subsequent forms made by a single client as he progressed through the therapeutic sessions which stretched over several months.

The therapist's role is to be a guide in examining his patient's problem situation by posing questions, starting with 'What do you see in the form you created?' Then continue prompting with the question: 'What else do you see?'. Keep asking 'What else?' to elicit the patient's observations of the qualities of the form such as dimension, surface type, concavity and convexity, spaces and components in the sculpture. From the physical qualities, the therapist moves on to feelings. 'How does the form feel?'. Feelings such as 'pain', 'delight', 'tension' might be expressed. The focus is to be on the form, not on the person. Sometimes it is advisable to let him or her have a fresh look at the sculpture after a while, the next day for instance.

Fritz stressed on 'focus' in doing sculpture therapy. Listening to music should be avoided, as external noise causes distraction and prevents one from getting into the 'inner world'. Subsequently, after completing the examination of the first form, the therapist would move on to get the patient to create specific forms, make alterations, or even destroy some of them. Being a sculpture therapist requires one to be objective and to avoid attempts to interpret the forms made. It was interesting to note that while a psychotherapist focused on feelings and past experiences, sculpture therapy emphasized on the present and the future.



These three sculptures in clay were completed during the time when Fritz was conducting lessons on Sculpture Therapy. It was not simply a theoretical course as we had to create a few sculptures during his workshop.

A surprise trip to Switzerland

Shortly after the departure of Fritz, we were transported from the classroom to an open-air learning space. Yet another course related trip less than three months after returning from Norway! This was not a pre-planned trip either. It seemed that the final year was full of surprises.

Through Fritz's connection, we were able to stay one week in a mountain resort in a remote village in Switzerland, for free, while having a go at snow sculpting. Wildhaus is a small village at an elevation of 1095 metres with a population of around 1200. We were all excited at the prospect of being able to practise land art which we had studied in our second year. It was also a chance for us to do a bit of social art, as the village community would enjoy our creation. This rare opportunity was open not only to us. Rudolf also invited Emerson's sculpture course graduates to participate as well.

On a cold day in the middle of February, eight of us final year students, three graduates and Rudolf arrived at the location.

We were shocked to see the magnitude of our project. Huge piles of snow were sitting on a piece of land about the size of a football field, and tools such as shovels, spades, and forks were all lined up for us to start work. Well, this was certainly not about making tiny snowmen or snowballs. The job on hand was more like to create a wonderland in snow for the villagers. All of us



had no idea what to do or how to start. Fortunately, we had Rudolf who set us the task of first designing the land sculpture by creating a clay model. After one whole day of teamwork, a design was completed and agreed. No time for much deliberation as we had only one week to complete the task.

Every morning after breakfast we went to work in the cold, returning just before the winter darkness descended on us. The first time in all our course trips, we students need not cook our own meals. Instead we had the luxury of enjoying, together with other residents who were convalescing at the resort, the healthy and tasty meals prepared by its staff with organic ingredients. The dinner was followed by a relaxing evening, resting our aching arms and body before retiring to bed early for a fresh start on the next day's work.

The outcome of our snow installation was not exactly according to the original design. The form evolved as the days went by. Thanks to the few strong guys in our group which comprised more females than males, a tunnel was burrowed through the snow. We had to work with hard ice as well as soft snow. Shaping the compacted snow with our hands clad in padded gloves, we created steps with it.



These activities reminded me of the time when we were doing relief sculpture creating concave and convex forms on a horizontal plane of clay. Now, the plane

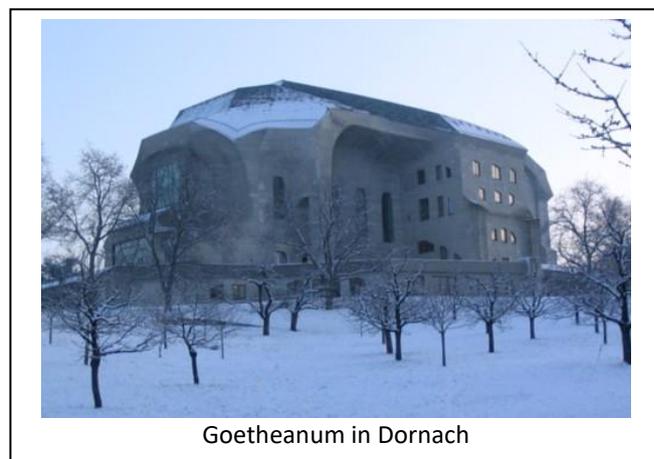
was a big field of snow. Our legs were also changing the snow form unintentionally as they sank into the soft snow when we stepped on it, making undesirable marks.



Rudolf periodically asked us to stop work in our individual groups of two or three, to look at the big picture, the whole structure, to make sure that the left hand knew what the right hand was doing. We stopped working on the land sculpture only minutes before its 'opening ceremony'. The villagers were invited to walk through our installation dotted with tea lights along the pathways. It was magical as our faces and the snow glowed in these tiny lights shining in the darkness of the evening.

The Goetheum

Immediately after the wonderful snow sculpting experience, we departed for our next destination in Switzerland – Dornach - to visit The Goetheum designed by



Rudolf Steiner. This building, constructed between 1925 and 1928, is the seat for the General Anthroposophical Society. The buildings around it comprise ateliers, research laboratories, workshops, guest houses and training centres. The Goetheum itself houses two theatres, one with 1000, and the other with 450 seats

which stage performances regularly – drama, concerts, eurythmy and recitations.

Goethe's tragic play Faust, both Part 1 and Part 2, considered as the greatest work in German literature had its world premiere in the Goetheanum in 1938.

The purpose of the visit was to spend a few days studying the exterior and interior design of Goetheanum. The whole complex is a piece of land art with buildings designed to harmonise with the distant mountains and the shape of the terrain.

Inside the building, we studied a huge wooden sculpture, about thirty feet in height, created by Steiner. This artwork named *The Representative of Humanity* did not strike me as being beautiful, perhaps it was not meant to be. Steiner carved it to show the dramatic tension between Ahriman and Lucifer with the figure of Christ in the middle. Another artwork inside the building we examined was the sequence of seven capital motifs illustrating Steiner's concept of metamorphosis. The design of the tops of the seven pillars in the main hall related to the qualities of the seven planets - Saturn, Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus. These motifs were still fresh in our minds as only a few months ago we were in Emerson sketching them from books, and creating models displaying the qualities of each of them.

My last painting experience in Emerson

After an eventful first two months of 2006, we were grounded in Emerson. Johanna did oil painting with us towards the end of the second term. It was a beautiful time as we made our own canvases again and primed them outside our studio while taking in the fresh spring air. The objective of this module was to study a colour in depth. Red, which was the colour for planet Mars according to Steiner, was my choice. I felt the need to awaken the Mars' qualities in me after having stayed in a dreamy paradise for more than two years. After mixing cadmium red with crimson alizarin to create ten variations of red, I went around the college to collect feedback from students and staff as to which kind of red made them more awake. This little survey helped me to choose the 'right' kind of red for my painting, which was executed on the biggest canvas I had ever used in the college so far - 190 by 100 cm.

Creating this abstract painting was an interesting struggle for me. My original plan was to create an artwork with red as the dominant colour, plus a bit of white and black and may be peach. I started off by



My largest painting completed in Emerson College

putting a red coat of paint on the whole canvas, and as I progressed, the work became too powerful for me.

One day after more than a week of grappling and getting nowhere, the need to get away from the painting was so strong that I went for a long walk - from the college to East Grinstead, a town three miles away, and back. The next day, questioned by Johanna why I was absent from class, I replied that the classroom was getting rather claustrophobic for me. Happily, the walk had done wonders,

as I finally completed the artwork in the next two days. The outcome was a painting with just two colours, red and black, the latter created by mixing blue and orange.

This painting received some interesting comments from viewers. A fellow student, who was not on the art course, told me that he saw the image of the resurrection of Christ in the red paint. Perhaps because Easter was approaching, and being on the story-telling course, his imagination went a bit wild. Another remark came from a friend in London who kept the painting for me for a few years after the end of my course at Emerson. He said it aroused feelings of pain and discomfort whenever he looked at it.

The three-week painting with Johanna was the last taught module. We had now reached the most significant component of the whole course - embarking on our individual final project full-time and bringing to a closure the three years of study in Emerson College. Even more importantly, I had to think of what to do next after graduation.