

Kindred Spirits Talk Transcript

Jennifer Gilbert, Vivienne Roberts, Zinnia Nishikawa and o2o (Allen)

Wednesday 10 March 2021

Each speaker has been given a different coloured text – to help differentiate between each one

Jennifer: There are two interpreters with us today, Siobhan who's on screen now and Alex who will come on halfway through. If you need to use the British sign language interpreters you can hover over their video and pin them to the screen by pressing the three little dots and then pinning them.

I'm Jennifer Gilbert from the Jennifer Lauren Gallery, and thank you to everyone for coming today to this talk that's part of the 'kindred spirits' online exhibition. Today for a change I'm not going to be doing the talking, I'm handing this over to my friend, Vivienne Roberts, who's the curator and archivist from the College of psychic studies in London. And we're joined by the artists, o2o, whose name is Allen who is in the UK, and then Zinnia Nishikawa, who is in Florida. If anyone would like to ask any questions, if you want to pop them in the chat box, then please do, or if you need to be able to ask the question out loud, please do a little digital raise of your hand. And I'll spot that, and then we'll be able to let you ask your question, if you need to do that. This is the fourth online exhibition that I have done now. The rest of them are all on my website, and it's all funded by Arts Council England, which is super. This is being recorded today, so if you want to share it with anyone else, it will be on the website in a couple of days. So, without further ado, I'm going to pass over to Vivienne.

Vivienne: Thank you. I just wanted to start off actually just say that I met Zinnia a few years ago now in about 2016, and I was introduced to her work by Roger Cardinal the great late Roger Cardinal. And so it was really interesting to see her work for the first time and then Allen. I became aware of his work, just last year when the college did a competition called 'inspiration from isolation' during lockdown. And so it's just lovely to see Jennie put this exhibition together and see these two works, which I really admire, from the artists that I like so much coming together. So they're here now side by side. The title of the show is 'kindred spirits' and Jennie asked me to write the text for that, so I was kind of working my mind through what it means for these artists to come together and what I realised then was looking back in the history of kindred spirit inspired art or visionary art or psychic art that actually, there was a continuum. And if we look at the next slide, I just wanted to start to bring together some kindred spirits from the past. So as you see here you've got zinnia's work on the left, and then Madame bouttier is on the right, and Madame Bouttier's is from 1899. Her work is seldom seen, there's not many that exist anymore. You'll see that over a century ago, there were artists working in a really sort of similar way. And if you look at the next slide for Allen, we've got the same year, that was Madame Bouttier was Fernand Desmoulin, whose work is on the right here. And then,

Allen's drawings on the left. So I just found this really incredible. And if we go to the next slide, I have just shown another couple of artists that might surprise you. So we've got Allen on the left and Alice Pery, who was working in the 1870s right up to 1906. And then the last slide is Hilma af Klint who is really famous at the moment, along with one of Zinnia's really early works from the 90s from one of her notebooks, and the other ones are from Hilma af Klint. They've only been published in the last year, so none of these works would have been ever known to the artists. But it's really interesting that a lot of time when you're looking at outsider art, you're kind of looking at people that are very individual. Whereas, when we're looking at these spirit artists, we're actually starting to see sort of groups coming together. And I thought my first question really is to ask Zinnia and Allen, how they kind of felt about when they first started working in this way, which is quite an unusual way. Was it a real surprise to them and did they feel they were alone, or did they realise later on, that there were many more like them? So, maybe, Allen could you start with that?

Allen: Yeah. So I was thinking about this earlier because I think I only became comfortable with sort of coming to terms with what my work was a few years back. So, we're talking about three years ago now, because before then I always put myself in a surrealist sort of bubble. And even though, like personally I knew what my work was, I was never comfortable speaking to people about what the work was. And as for being surprised about how it sort of came together... It's been over time and the last couple of weeks I've been looking over past works. And it's surprising to see like little things that have started to creep in. But it was sort of more stylised because I guess I was thinking about it more, rather than just letting the feelings flow through. So yeah, for me, I guess it well when I first spoke to you, Vivienne. You showed me some of the works in the past. That was the shock for me because I've never seen them works before so their correlation... it was kind of profound really, when I seen that.

Vivienne: It's kind of fascinating that you don't just learn and, yeah, it's not as if you're doing the same, but what I feel like is that you are reaching the same levels of consciousness as these artists have done before. It's kind of like the process, comes out to me. And that's what creates these extraordinary works. How did you feel about that Zinnia? Because you started with doodling didn't you in the 90s?

Zinnia: I see a very interesting development, because when I first started it was an accidental discovery. In my mind, I like doing it, but it was nothing really special. I used to draw eyes, all over my textbooks, especially my science textbooks when I was bored in the classroom. But, after my schooling in 1994, I just took it to a different level that I couldn't, you know, recognise. I wasn't actually doing that because it was my subconscious idea... when the picture formed at the end. So my earlier drawings used to be really simple. I used to draw female faces, or woman. Even girls and girls faces. Back then, it was very simple images that usually carried certain messages for me that I could sort of read or interpret based on my situation or

situations later on that occurred. I didn't really take it very seriously because, you know, I could draw. I had other things to keep myself busy so. I stopped working for about 10 years, a little bit over 10 years. And then, when I had a little bit more time on my hands, I started to remember oh I can do this, so I tried again and it came back. But still, it was really simple images. Everything was fine and I started again in 2014. I am ambidextrous. So, I could write simultaneously with both hands at the same time, but it's a mirror image. So sometimes I would just for fun, play with my left hand and, you know, write. And that evening, that writing became this automatic writing, this mysterious language - that was really the first time it happened. So, I was excited, and at the same time I had no idea what was happening. And then those languages came, as I kept writing. Not every day, but often they eventually turned into images, or symbols. Like some of the photos you've just shown. So, that was when I started to be interested. Like, I was really interested in finding out if there are other people out there who do the same thing. The writings were very different from my regular drawings. You could see that eventually these writings become a part of my drawings, incorporated in my regular drawings but that was something that happened later on. It didn't happen right away. But eventually it just gets incorporated into my regular drawings. So this enlarged piece of the canvas piece - that area in the middle is actually the text, the language. So, yeah, that was when I was actually compelled to reach out to see if I could find out what this is. Maybe if somebody read this or had seen like the images, they would be able to interpret or decipher something that I couldn't totally understand.

Vivienne: I think that's something that Madge Gill, who I've done a lot of work on, she did this. One of the reasons that she actually exhibited in the first place was the hope of finding somebody that could understand the symbols and the languages that were in her drawings because she couldn't understand them. Are you able to understand some of your languages because yours, yours are different to Allen's? I'll ask the same question to Allen in a minute because his tends to be in English, but yours definitely sort of stays in a sort of unknown language doesn't it?

Zinnia: Actually, I could identify in the writings, at least four or five different kinds of writings. I started with my left hand and later I just said, you know, you use both hands to do things but usually they are different things. So just out of curiosity, I said I wanted to try if I could actually do the writings with my right hand. The other day, because I remembered I started with my left hand so I thought maybe I should try and see if I could still do it with my left hand. So I did this piece.

Vivienne: Wow, that's amazing.

Zinnia: Yeah. It was fun. You know, sometimes I like to do it just for fun.

Vivienne: Well I think it's a technique as well that's very good for freeing yourself up, isn't it, I think. I think that's a lot of people can do that when they can just change it a little bit, sort of. It kind of liberates them to be able to work in a different way than they would normally be able to. But going back to the text for Allen, how, when does the writing come into your work - was it before like Zinnia or was it before the drawing or the same time or?

Allen: Yeah, for me it was primary school. Yeah, well, way back then but the images came after. I started doing things, all sorts of things. I was just so confused of what I was trying to do and I couldn't understand what was sort of coming out at the time. I was sort of moving to sounds and all sorts at one time. And then I obviously went along with the meditation and then into trance, obviously. And yeah, I mean, with this one, this picture here, obviously we've got the text in the background. And then the sort of image, sort of builds up with the amount of text there in the background. And I actually call this 19, because if you look to the right, towards the bottom, there is a big 19. Basically, that is the reason why I called it that. But that's something that just sort of popped out a long time after I'd finished it and I was looking back in my notebook. With the text you often can't understand it because, as it looks English and it looks familiar but sometimes it's not, you can't actually make anything out of it, and sometimes it has been in bits of Spanish as well. You have to look really closely sometimes to see that it's actually language as it just forms part of the image.

Vivienne: Yeah. Wonderful. And do you always title your work, or by the titles like this one you actually could see something in it but generally do you?

Allen: Yeah, usually something has to sort of profoundly jump out at me. Or it's sort of what I'm looking at or when I'm doing the works. There is a name or a word or something or other. And as I've told you before, lately I've been working with the spirit box, as I'm doing the works. And often names will shout out, but that's something I can't usually get.

Vivienne: When you say a spirit box, is that something different to sort of clairaudience?

Allen: Yeah it's basically similar to that. I would get that normally when I'm sort of resting or if I'm lying quietly in bed or sitting quietly, I get sort of names or things shouting out at me. Whereas I get the same voice that is coming through the device, which is what I found strange. But this is something I've only been doing for a little while since last November, I think. So it's sort of alongside the drawings, where I'm not sort of ready to go to bed or, you know, so I can actually do it when I'm actually being creative.

Vivienne: so it's a kind of a process that you're still developing all the time?

Allen: Yeah

Vivienne: When I look at your work Zinnia, from the notebooks to now, and some of the work that you're producing which are quite large scale, I remember that one of them in the exhibition was a particularly large size... you've definitely changed your work over the years haven't you?

Zinnia: Yes, as I spent more time drawing. Each piece is like single piece and it becomes more detailed and complicated. I just let it happen. And that big canvas... I was in an art store that the canvas was in and it was on sale so I thought oh maybe I should try something different instead of paper. So, yeah, that was my first time to try on canvas.

Vivienne: That's amazing. Do you title your work, or are they untitled?

Zinnia: I never title or sign my work until there is a reason for me to, like a exhibition. That's the hard part to title it, because when I do my drawings, I don't really do it with my conscious mind. So it's hard for me to come up with a title. Usually, when I have to title a piece of work, I would just meditate or contemplate and then something will pop up.

Vivienne: How does it feel to recall the process, you know because it's a deeper consciousness isn't it, so how does it actually feel compared to sort of your normal consciousness? Do you know when you're going to want to draw something?

Zinnia: That part when I start or stop, that's up to me. I could start anytime or stop in the middle, in between my drawing to do something else and come back and continue that part. I can decide for myself, but what I can't predict is how it's going to go and what it's going to look like. Like, there's a rhythm in my head, I could follow the rhythm, and form certain patterns that eventually I will create the whole picture. Like, I produce the puzzle pieces without a whole image to follow. Sometimes when you see the pictures in the process, sometimes I take photos of the different parts. It is random pieces that are scattered in seemingly random and unrelated places but as it progresses, it all comes together. I feel sometimes there's something like guiding me, but not all the time. It's like when the train is going straight, it just goes. It just flows, and when it needs to turn, you feel the force that guides you hard.

Allen: It's strange actually because like Zinnia, I have the same kind of thing, like you said, like a puzzle. So at first it starts and I don't know what's going to happen. Over time, slowly things just start to come into play and I notice things and then they sort of in the end it all comes together. Sometimes you don't know what's gonna sort of transpire from it.

Vivienne: Allen you've said that when you've finished your piece, you might leave it for a while, and then go back, and that's a kind of a different consciousness that you're using then to change it. Can you explain that?

Allen: So sometimes I can leave it. I will do the automatic writing. And then I'll sort of just leave it and it can be half a year or a year, before I go back. Maybe I feel the urge to sort of rework and start to work into that piece again. But going back to the how do you feel as well, I was thinking of how it actually feels when I'm producing the work. And it's the only way I can explain it - it's like the feeling of being nervous and sort of short of breath. That's like shallow breathing. That's the only way I can sort of explain how I go when I'm sort of deep in the moment of working.

Vivienne: Do you have any kind of rituals that you always do: like to have certain music on or light a candle or any of that sort of thing, does that help with the process?

Allen: Sometimes yeah, sometimes I have music. The one I did the other night, I had music on, just sort of like opera musical kind of music, nothing too aggressive. Yeah, it's just sort of that deep relaxation, trying to get into that, to that moment, into that feeling and then locking into that feeling and sort of letting go.

Vivienne: Once you've finished does the nervousness or that kind of anxious type feeling, does that go?

Allen: It sort of just stops and then usually that's when I notice - because sometimes you don't know when to stop. That's the problem I had at first, but I found that I had that feeling and then once it stopped. That's when I felt compelled to stop because I found after that, I was sort of putting things in consciously, rather than it being a feeling.

Vivienne: Zinnia how do you feel when you've finished drawing?

Zinnia: Actually my hand would drop the pencil and would put it down, but not all the time. Sometimes I just want to be done with it.

Vivienne: Some of your work is very difficult to kind of tell the orientation, you know. There's so many different ways you can look at it?

Zinnia: Yeah that's what I do, I turn the paper constantly as I'm drawing. So, you see the images are sort of like upside down. Words are upside down, the fish are upside down. But if you turn the orientation - it really depends on each person. Most of them don't really have a certain orientation. If you turn the paper, you probably will see different things or the whole picture changes.

Vivienne: Yes when I was putting on a show of your work at the college, I was constantly just doing this to decide like what way do we hang them?

Zinnia: Sometimes I wish that the frames could rotate itself, so they can just go with which way suits them.

Vivienne: Also you know, you're not alone because Chris Neate, who's also in this exhibition, he does the same as he's constantly turning works. He's actually moved into circular works now because they lend itself to rounds. I remember you saying that was interesting that sometimes working in black and white, you can keep that flow going, but introducing colour, sometimes can stop that flow. Is that right?

Zinnia: Yes that's the reason I actually prefer with using just one single colour. Normally, I would choose to use black - black ink or black pencil, because I can totally focus, without interruption. When I do colours. I have to stop and choose different colours. I could interrupt the flow.

Vivienne: How about you Allen, because because often you're black and white and then recently I've been seeing your colour work. So let's have a look.

Allen: I don't know what sort of happened with the colour, it just sort of crept its way in. But like zinnia I prefer working monochrome and with depth with pencil and charcoal. I don't know where the colour sort of lends itself really, it's sort of just wherever it's from, maybe my oil paintings. It's sort of crept in that way, but I think that's what it is I sort of gained a love of using oils at one time on canvas. And I think it sort of came in. Jennifer said in the past it sort of looks like watercolour. Anyway, it's oils on canvas.

Vivienne: I mean, this one is so dramatic where you've got that line in the middle where you've allowed colour on one side, but you monochrome on the other.

Allen: Yeah, I still don't understand this for myself.

Vivienne: Zinnia are there any pieces that really surprised you when you finish, oh gosh yeah this one. This is amazing. This is so different to you, from your normal work.

Zinnia: Yes. This one surprised me. Many of them do, but this one particularly I remember, because this piece was actually very different from most of my regular drawings at the time. I usually use lines a lot, but the whole piece was made with dots. I kept turning the paper and then different things got formed with dots and then I had no idea what it was going to be like until the end. It actually, it looks scary to me.

Vivienne: It is scary. And you've never done anything like this since?

Zinnia: I do have some pieces in my notebook. When I regularly do my work, especially large pieces, it drains my energy. So usually after I finish one piece, I need a break. I read, you know, like a good rest, but I also spend time on my notebook and drawing in my notebook. It's very comforting and, like, healing and relaxing and like meditation. You get recharged at getting energy from it if that makes sense.

Vivienne: I think it really does. One of the things that really appeals to me for both Allen and you are the notebooks. So if we could go back to where we showed a couple of slides of the notebooks when we compared your work originally to Hilma and her notebooks. And it just seems to me that a lot of Spirit inspired artists, really work with a kind of a more intimate way that they might have otherwise in these sort of secret books or these notebooks which have something really personal in them and they work their way through things. And both of you have got these incredible notebooks. I absolutely adore them. And on the left here is this one of zinnia's, and then on the next slide, we've got Allen's. So, Allen could you tell me more about your notebooks and, you know, how do you sort of look to them, compared to your normal sometimes huge canvases as they're quite different?

Allen: Yeah, I mean, the notebook ones and sketchbooks they seem to be more like, as you say like an intimate part of myself, rather than a piece of artwork that I'm putting out. They tend to have a lot of thoughts. If I'm reflecting on things, I'll have writing on the backs of them and yeah they're done all over different places. As I said before, like I get the urge to do them. You say the same thing with the big works that's sort of a separation. Even though it is my work and it is personal to me. The bigger works, obviously, are over a longer period of time, whereas the sketchbooks are quicker. There's sort of just that one intimate, little bit of time where I sort of just lose myself within them and yeah and sort of just always like visiting back to them and obviously, like we said before, that's when sometimes it can become a totally different outcome when I revisit the books. They're always fun just to look at - they're a constant companion.

Vivienne: Yes. I think Zinnia, you've described yours as a conflict, haven't you? Is that how you feel about them, that you also carry on going back to your notebooks?

Zinnia: Yes. I describe it in a way like when I spend time on my notebook. It's like I'm home alone, you can just wear your pyjamas, with messy hair and make silly faces in the mirror to yourself. Nobody has to like it, or nobody cares, and it just totally for myself. So, that's how I feel with my notebook.

Vivienne: Is it difficult to exhibit your work do you feel as if people are looking, you know, at it in different ways and then you were looking at it or how you produce it. Is it difficult to exhibit?

Zinnia: Before, I was showing the bigger pieces. I know that eventually probably I would like to work with some galleries, or people would like to see the work in the exhibition. That's like when you're going out to meet people like you can't just have your messy hair. My work has different energies, if it makes any sense. My energy with my notebook is totally relaxed and free, but when I do the larger pieces with a lot of details and colours. It drains my energy somehow. But, I noticed that when I use colours, it does produce a different impact in the image that brings out things that I don't normally have in my notebooks.

Allen: Yeah, when I've had exhibits and I've had my work out there, people find it interesting, but I don't think they sort of can understand what it is. I exhibited one in London, a few years back, where I was using ignited petrol. And people thought that I just consciously put all these images into the to the artworks whereas it wasn't. It was the actual fire that put the images into the works. As you can see on this one now. Because if you look on the right side it's totally untouched. That's just literally what the flames did. So you can see there's one sort of face with its mouth open there on the right side. And if you look right down in the bottom right. You can just see a face. So you can see the nose, the eye and the mouth, just peeking through. But these were all just done by igniting a flame, and there's a certain thing that happens when I'm doing this process of work, where it sort of reacts with the wind, and this is sort of. I don't know how to explain it, with sort of like the wind and the flame sort of mixing. So you get this sort of noise. And usually that's when the images sort of appear.

Vivienne: I mean for me this is such a sort of alchemical processes. You feel like you're going through these stages and then colour goes on as well towards the end. But this is a big piece isn't it? I mean, you can't tell from the image how big this is!

Allen: I think it was 2x3m, but I can't think of the actual size now. It's actually in Spain at the minute, but it is a big piece. So what I do is, I'll do like an automatic writing kind of thing with the petrol. And then I ignite it, and it just does what it wants to do. And then over time I'll have it in my room on an easel. I reflect upon it, and then I start to see images straightaway. I've actually got videos of this one where you can see the images appearing as I'm sort of doing it. So yeah, it's hard to sort of get across that. If I'm exhibiting, I don't think people get what goes into the work.

Vivienne: So this is one of your favourite pieces.

Allen: It is yeah. It is kind of one of my favourites. It was just a bit of a breakthrough with the automatism and with the fire. This one wasn't my first one but yeah, there's something about it that really sort of speaks to me.

Vivienne: I just keep seeing more and more faces the longer I look at it.

Allen: Yeah, it sort of just draws you in with the more the more you look at it, the more sort of jumps out at you.

Zinnia: Is it pencil?

Allen: No, it's actually just where I set fire to the canvas. So it's like the, I don't know how you say, like the soot? It's very free actually. When I first do them the soot would just rub or would come off.

Vivienne: I think this is a technique that the surrealists use quite a lot. I can't remember if it's from (name unknown?). There were few of those would use this and have effects like this, I think. I feel (cohoon?) was one of them that used this

Allen: Okay I didn't know this.

Vivienne: Yeah, so it's very similar, but not to this size. Your size is extraordinary the size. It's amazing.

Jennifer: I am going to ask a question from the chat box, too, aimed at both of you from Joyce Can I ask, were you brought up in families where there was a belief system regarding spiritualism or mediumship, and in what ways do you think your art is different from other artists who don't hold those beliefs?

Zinnia: I was born and raised in China. I was an atheist for a long time. I've been Christian since 98. Okay. As a part of culture I don't know if it's necessarily religious belief. There are certain kind of rituals or beliefs that came from 1000s of years ago as a part of my culture. But I don't think my drawing has anything to do with my upbringing, because it's totally not up to me, it's from my subconscious mind. Again, this goes back to the drawings that other people will see in my notebooks. Someone made a comment about one of my drawings, because it was kind of dark and it's hard to see the image, unless you look at it up close. I was talking to someone about my art and he looked at a piece and told me he didn't think it would sell. The only thing I could say is, it's not up to me. I don't get to decide how the work looks. I don't think you understand what I'm saying. Because, it is not from me, it's not from my conscious mind,

it's from my subconscious mind. I don't really intentionally make certain pieces, look like certain ways.

Jennifer: And what about you Allen?

Allen: Yeah, for me I never grew up, like my family weren't mediums or anything like that but obviously I had experiences in that sort of field from when I was young, like six upwards, maybe earlier than that but I can never sort of remember. And then I started going to a spiritualist church when I was sort of just before my 20s. And after one of the sessions I spoke to a medium and she sort of spoke to me and she was telling me that that I was deeply spiritual and I was telling her about everything that was happening to me, sort of, through the years. And then from there I was invited to a spiritual psychic circle or medium circle every Friday night. So it's just me as a sort of youngster and then all these older adults, and so I used to go there every week to this house and we would sort of meditate and do all different trans exercises and all these different things and I generally sort of lost my way a bit and sort of went away for a few years. I think I was so engrossed in it, it just drained me. Just drained all my energy all the time and the guy says it's draining you too much and you need to sort of level it off because it's just taking everything from you. And obviously, years later I sort of revisited it, and then it's sort of emerged itself again. Then with my artwork - I found that this is the way. I found it hard before even though I was hearing like through clairaudience, I was hearing things and it was hard for me to grasp on to it, because to me it was like someone that had a radio, and was just turning the volume up and down quickly. So sort of capturing these words or imagery was hard, and I was never able to capture it fully. It was sort of like I didn't understand how to fully open myself up. That's the way I believe now that whatever sort of comes out in my work – it is what it is. Trying to give a message or trying to show itself through that. But yeah, my family are not deeply spiritual. But it's always been there in my life separately. I think that's why maybe made it a bit embarrassing sometimes. Four years ago I was in France. And I went to see my friend there and just this one morning I woke up and I said to him, I think I need to just be honest with what my work is, and I'm going to sort of just push it towards that way, and let it flow. And I think ever since then it's just sort of. Yeah, it's just become what it is now. It's gone from level to level and it just it just keeps going on.

Vivienne: I think also there's been a huge change in the last few years about this type of artwork and the way people are much more receptive and respond quite well towards it and they're having huge museum shows now of just this type of artwork, if we look at the Guggenheim putting on Hilma af klint, the Whitney with Agnes Paulsen(?), and the college has its exhibition every couple years and one's going to be this summer as well. And even the serpentine and the Courtauld, you know, people are becoming very interested in it. I think especially with the climate that we are in where these works are, I think, just wonderfully sort of informative and really make you feel. So I think what you're doing is wonderful. I just wondered

if we look at maybe a couple of pictures from the exhibition, because that's what the viewers online are seeing.

Jennifer: Vivienne can we do like a quick description of what we can see for anyone that might not be able to see the image on screen. Could you describe what we can see?

Zinnia: This piece is 36 by 56 inches. Well, it's hard to capture the details. In the bottom left corner, it has the text, the mysterious language there, that we talked about earlier. It was actually the very first time that this text became part of my regular work. So, that was the beginning of it, because before that it's usually I could see it very clearly that there was a separation of my regular drawing, and the mysterious writing. And this was the beginning of, when it started to come into my regular drawing. So, there's a lot of details. And because it's a soft canvas, I had sort of folded it and turned it as I worked in certain areas. I don't usually finish one area and move on to the next area – I do it all simultaneously at the same time. So, this is scattered all around. I had to go back to those areas that I left. So, yeah, this one is the largest ones I've done so far.

Vivienne: Do you know what these creatures are? Because it's full of fish like bird like type creatures, usually?

Zinnia: Yes sometimes birds and sometimes fish, but they are sort of inclined to, like, integrate into one another. Like if you see a bird maybe you will see something else if you turn it to different orientation. Yeah, like the same thing, if you turn, you will see something different. But that's how it happens. I also noticed that certain creatures keep coming back. So the one on the bottom, it looks like octopus. It also appeared in my other drawings. Things that you usually see in my earlier drawing, very early like in the 90s. After that, I would draw like fish, birds, a lot. And then snakes and dinosaurs. And then complicated creatures that we don't normally see.

Jennifer: Zinnia, Judith has asked if you have a sense of what your creatures might actually symbolize from the spirit world?

Zinnia: I don't know, but when I did the writing, it first came to me in 2014. They were very obvious. It was very special, I could actually feel it was spiritual. I do certain symbols. And if I could feel it. I just knew it was something very different. Sometimes I do certain symbols in my regular drawings. It has become more complicated in my drawings with more details. I will draw what symbols come to me and occasionally numbers and pyramids and reptiles. I really don't know the meaning behind it.

Vivienne: I think the next one, we've got one of Allen's, and this for me is another really unusual one. Can you talk us through this one and also, could you describe what we can see on the screen in case people aren't able to see it?

Allen: It's weird just because I just sensed this one was gonna come up. It's strange because this is a very small scale. I'm not sure of scale of this book, but that's how big it is. It's very small scale. So we can see in the background, it starts with automatic writing. And then sort of I work with an eraser and also I do automatic writing with an eraser. And also just smudge the page. I actually use pencils. So I get these sort of forms where you can see a negative in the tone. And that's actually from the eraser. And then obviously from that I start to see the image whereas this one, like this last one, it's some sort of creature. I haven't got a clue what it, what sort of creature it is, but you can see, these eyes and lips and, obviously, a body sort of coming through the depths of the tone. Yeah, it's hard for me to explain this one because, as I said, it's nothing. It's a weird creature. This one is quite a while ago. I think I first started the automatic writing maybe a year, year and a half ago. And then I worked on it last summer. And then also, I think I sort of worked on it again in the first lockdown. I sort of just put more depth into the tones.

Vivienne: So has drawing been important for you both during the lockdown? Has it made it easier to sort of get through this strange time?

Allen: Yeah, I think so. I mean like it's important as well just not to say let it get to you too much, and sort of try and go from your daily activities. But yeah I think the drawing and painting helped a lot also just to channel anything that was sort of built up in you. I think it's always good to release emotions out onto the page.

Vivienne: How about you Zinnia?

Zinnia: I started up regular drawing, like drawing in my notebooks, beginning this year. So for the last year or even the year before, I spent most of time drawing in my notebook.

Vivienne: I think we've got a couple of pictures of your latest work?

Zinnia: That one I would like it to be vertical.

Vivienne: We can all turn our heads! I mean, just to quickly describe this one. For me, with some of your earlier pieces the creatures were really interwoven and they really got quite intense in times. And this later work feels to me as if there's so much space in between each of the little creatures, or little, you know, flourishes of... I don't know how you describe it sort of floral or not, but there seems to be space and then you've got this wonderful spiral in the

middle. That just leaves this empty circle. So that is something unseen... that is new for your work for me.

Zinnia: Yeah, I noticed that too. It seems like there is more room to float around for these images. I mean there's parts in the images like there feels like more movement.

Vivienne: And it feels like there's small elements of mechanical creatures. I don't know if you're seeing that as well. There's one down the bottom which kind of looks like there's sort of some mechanical works going on. It doesn't seem so organic.

Zinnia: Yeah, that's exactly what some people who have seen my certain pieces work would say – do you study like organism? I was talking to someone who works in a lab who uses equipment to analyse cells and she said she could actually see the similar familiarity from some of the things in my drawings to what she sees through the microscope.

Vivienne: That's amazing. And here, oh it is beautiful. So this is just one piece, not three pieces?

Allen: This is one piece. Yeah. So I started this last October/November time. Yeah, it's a huge piece size wise. I think it's three foot by two foot - I think around that sort of size. But yeah, it started off as it usually does with the automatic writing and the eraser automatic. Then I decided to just go ahead and sort of add colour. I've never worked with watercolors before properly so yeah this is the one I started - I just went for it. And, yeah, these faces just keep popping up. I was working on it last night and on the top left, actually another one, sort of popped out of it. So yeah, it's a work in progress but yes there's so many things that jump out at you when you're when you're looking at it as well. It's quite bright, it's really vibrant as well, when you see it.

Vivienne: It feels like it's got huge sorts of borders around the people. Yeah, like a colour energy field.

Allen: Yeah it's almost like auras with the orbs as well. Yeah, there's all these different sort of all shapes and there's just all these different things that sort of jumped out at me. I think it's interesting as well because it's sort of in between the two - obviously it's got colour but there's also elements of my past works with the tonal as well. It's a bit of a slow burner compared to the sketchbooks, but it's sort of enjoyable as well. And every time I look at it I sort of feel something from it so I feel it's really exciting to see how this one will develop.

Jennifer: Right we've ran over slightly so I was going to ask you, Vivienne if you've got anything final you'd like to say before we ask the artists if they've got anything they'd like to finish on?

Vivienne: It was a perfect end and actually that was my last question.

Jennifer: Oh good, and Zinnia and Allen Is there anything you'd like to finish on that you haven't said already?

Zinnia: Just thank you everyone for listening.

Allen: Yeah, we hope you enjoyed it. Thank you.

Jennifer: So thank to the artists and to Vivienne, and I'll be putting this on the website in a couple of days for anyone that missed it or would like to share it with anyone else, alongside the transcript. And thank you to the interpreters to Siobhan and Alex and I hope everyone has a wonderful evening. Thank you.