

**Somatic Expression in Nature: Embodying Your Place in the World**  
**With Jamie McHugh and Guests Online**  
**April – September 2023**



For the past 30 years, I have been guiding weeklong group immersive retreats primarily on the Northern California coast, but also in the French and Swiss Alps, and the German and Oregon forests. These somatic-expressive journeys into self and place have been codified with students over time in the Embodying Nature/Somatic Expression protocol that has been developed through trial and error, witnessing and responding, recycling and clarifying. It is time to spread this evolving work out into the world for more “homegrown” explorations and applications.

**Embodying Nature/Somatic Expression** combines the fullness of sensorimotor engagement with aesthetic creativity in the natural environment – quite simply, we land in ourselves, open up our perceptual capacities, engage with the immediate natural environment mindfully and playfully through our bodies, and use the multiple channels of aesthetic creativity to cohere and integrate our experience in a tangible way. What makes this approach unique is the confluence of mindfulness, bodyfulness and playfulness as a pathway into a deep relationship with the larger body of the planet.

- Cultivate a somatic-expressive relationship with your own terrain
- Investigate, explore, romance and in-corporate place in an ongoing manner
- Create as a means to share with others, using your phones for images, videos, and sound recordings as part of your expressive repertoire

**Somatic Attunement – Relational Presence – Creative Engagement**

*“At a certain point, you say to the woods, to the sea, to the mountains, the world, Now I am ready. Now I will stop and be wholly attentive. You empty yourself and wait, listening.” - Annie Dillard*

**Sensorimotor engagement:** A good part of readiness is clearing the mind by attuning to the body’s sensibilities through the five somatic technologies. Simple somatic practices create the transition from the ordinary body to the extraordinary one, shifting from repetitive/habitual ways of breathing, moving and thinking to varied ways of perceiving in present time. With this inner re-orientation comes more ease for attention to both focus and wander, and perceive the outer landscape in unaccustomed ways, creating an opening into substantive contact and connection.

**Sensorimotor engagement** consists of The Five Somatic Technologies (Breath, Vocalization, Contact, Movement and Stillness) with the Five Phase Relational Map (Witness, Contact, Mirror, Respond and Rest). You can read an article about the methodology here:

<http://www.somaticexpression.com/documents/EmbodyingNatureArticle.pdf>

*“If you can walk, you can dance. And if you can talk, you can sing.” - Pygmy saying*

**Aesthetic Channels of Creativity:** Art is for all people. It is re-creation. It is inspiration. It is the multiple languages of the senses heightened, utilized and made visible. And the impulse to create is embedded in the human soul, just as it is embedded in the larger cosmology. We knew how to do this naturally as 5 year olds – to make up songs, spontaneously dance, sculpt our environments, and play with color and words. Art was fun and joyful, an effortless expression of our aliveness. Coming back into contact to place through sensorimotor engagement reveals the participatory art of nature as we become “part of” the creative act.

**Aesthetic Channels of Creativity:** Writing, Spoken Word, Recorded Soundscapes, Images (Drawn and/or Photographed), Videos, and more...



## MONTHLY STRUCTURE

- 1) **Group meetings online** (experiential) 1x/month for 6 months - the first and last meetings in April and September are 2 days. These online gatherings are used for exploring somatic practices and the relational map to apply out in the field as well as for exchange with other participants. **9am-noon Pacific time each day**
  - April 1-2 (Formation, Somatic Technologies, and Phase 1: Rest & Witness)
  - May 6 (Phase 2: Contact)
  - June 3 (Phase 3: Mirror)
  - July 8 (Phase 4: Respond)
  - August 5 (Phase 5: Respond and Recycle)
  - September 9-10 (Completion)
- 2) **Specific focus** will be given for your explorations of the inner and outer landscape - see a sample practice: <http://www.somaticexpression.com/classes/documents/ENSP.pdf>
- 3) **Individual consultation** with Jamie (6 consults scheduled during the course)
- 4) **Guest presentations online** from Eco-Somatic practitioners and allies (TBA)  
**Fridays, 10-11am Pacific Time**
  - April 21
  - May 19
  - June 16
  - July 21
  - August 18
- 5) **Selected readings and videos** to offer different aesthetic/social/cultural perspectives
- 6) **Small group check-ins** to share resources and experiences, keep the spark of adventure alive between sessions, and create a generative community

## WHO & HOW

This laboratory is for all ages and types of people who want to commit to somatic-expressive engagement with the natural environment for 6 months – as a meditative experience; as a creative experience; as a spiritual experience; or as a social experience. It can be for continuing education and/or personal re-creation. The application of the model is as diverse as the individuals who use it - Embodying Nature has been used as a foundation for performance, creative writing, environmental education and ecopsychology. What is important to me is that you make space in your life to enter into an active relationship with your bioregion and learn from your own practice of exploration what nature has to offer to you – and what you have to offer to nature. **All online gatherings are recorded for playback for your personal use.**

**\$675-975 Sliding Scale** According to your economic means/ fees are deliberately low to encourage inclusivity. Submit an application to Jamie McHugh [naturebeingart@gmail.com](mailto:naturebeingart@gmail.com) with a little information about yourself and your intention for being part of this group. Payment and technical information will then be sent.



**YOUR GUIDE Jamie McHugh**

I have primarily lived in rural locations on the US West Coast for the past 20 years. While staying connected to the modern world virtually, the bulk of my time was in the vastness of the environment. I became a photographer of water in all of its many dimensions, particularly in the coastal ecosystem of waves and eddies, coves and tidal pools.

The beach was my movement studio where I could lay down in the embrace of sand, breathe and move while listening to the ever-present drone of the ocean, and enter another frame of consciousness. Taking my camera on these excursions amplified this kinesthetic state of mind though focused attention on the visual domain. Where the confluence of breath, vocalization, movement and stillness enabled a wide-open fluid perception, the focus the lens enabled brought concise attention to detail, form, and color. Suspending time temporarily, momentarily holding my breath and pressing the button to embrace an ephemeral moment as a still image, and then viewing that image in the camera's monitor became a repetitive practice of action-reflection, impression-expression, gather-hold...and then release, re-set, wiggle and glide.

This rhythm of concentrated attention modulated by spacious breath and movement was a reward unto itself, deepening my relationship with place while altering my state of being. Having all these countless "souvenirs" (from French, *memory*) that I could share with others as prints and video montages was an extra bonus! Making art has potentiated and amplified my relationship to place just as place has potentiated and amplified my aesthetic sensibility.

[www.naturebeingart.org](http://www.naturebeingart.org)

This mutually informing process is what I wish to share in this laboratory dedicated to Somatic Attunement, Relational Presence, and Creative Engagement – with ourselves, others and the environment. You can discover more about my teaching history here:

[http://www.somaticexpression.com/about\\_Jamie\\_McHugh.html](http://www.somaticexpression.com/about_Jamie_McHugh.html)

**GUEST ARTISTS (TBA)**