

generative scribing

A SOCIAL ART
of the 21st CENTURY

Kelvy Bird



Cambridge, Massachusetts

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for all who aspire to see

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contents

<i>foreword</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>acknowledgments</i>	<i>xi</i>
00 introduction	1
about this book	12
01 model of practice	17
the diamond	19
the iceberg	28
presencing	34
containers	37
field	40
source	43
02 be	49
can't	51
opening	53
authenticity	57
cultivation	59
zone	62
03 join	67
sadness	68
soften	70
attend	73
listen	76
laugh	80
ripples	82

04 perceive	87
fear	88
suspend	93
frame	98
reframe	101
time	104
05 know	111
anger	112
trust	114
balance	117
coherence	120
discernment	124
choice	129
06 draw	133
joy	134
envisioning	136
levels of scribing	138
generative scribing	143
the call	147
07 appendix	153

foreword

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche suggests that his task as a philosopher was to “look at science through the optic of the artist, and to look at art through the optic of life.” Kelvy Bird’s book does in the world of scribing and social art what Nietzsche’s work did in the world of philosophy: it marks the end of one period and foreshadows the beginning of another.

I have known Kelvy for more than twenty years, as a client (I employed her to scribe during client engagements), as a colleague (we co-created the Presencing Institute), and as a friend. Having also worked with many other scribe practitioners over the years, I have a good sense of how significant the body of work is that Kelvy, together with her colleagues, has developed.

I have seen Kelvy grow from a remarkable scribe practitioner to a true pioneer of an entirely new quality of scribing. In her work, Kelvy translates ideas, concepts, and processes into imagery by listening from a deeper place, what I call the Source. The goal is to make this Source level of awareness more accessible, in order to “presence” what a group or a social system wants to express, and then make it visible.

Accomplishing this is at the heart of this book. It’s not a linear process. It’s an attunement to a field. It’s the art of allowing your hand to move and operate *from* the field, expressing the collective knowing, the felt sense in a system or group. How do you do that? By opening your heart. And when you are lucky, you connect to the collective by opening their hearts too. The result is a visualization of collective footprints that functions as a mirror that groups can use to look at their work and their journeys from a new angle.

That is the territory that this book investigates and explores as an emerging discipline. It’s relevant not only to scribe practitioners who want to evolve their practice to do

generative scribing. It is also relevant for other social artists, facilitators, and presencing practitioners who want to hone their capacity to activate generative social fields.

When I read the “Model of Practice” section of the book, it struck me that Kelvy’s integrative drawing actually looks and works like an upside-down human being: with the open mind at the bottom (knowing), the open heart at the center (being, perceiving, joining), and the open will at the top (drawing). The process that Kelvy describes starts at the heart, continues with the action, and then results in new knowledge. So it’s the opposite of conventional wisdom, which has us operating from the head to the hand (usually ignoring the heart).

Over the years I have seen Kelvy’s drawings transform from capturing a lot to capturing only the essence. The more focused the drawing, the more powerful its impact on me and on a group. Capturing the essence of an idea requires courage to leave things out (to let go). When I see the impact of her drawings on a group, her skill is very visibly validated. I have also learned that, as a facilitator, if I hand the microphone to Kelvy mid-process and at the end—she often captures the deeper tonality and feeling of the field better than anyone else. As a consequence, today, when facilitating, I partner with scribes not only so that they capture what’s being said, but in order to jointly activate a generative social field.

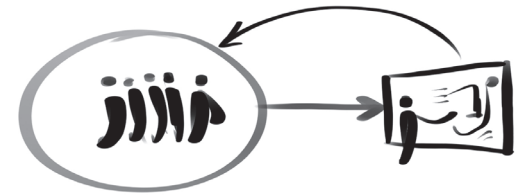
It has been said of Michelangelo that everything he touched was transformed by beauty. In collaborating and co-creating with Kelvy it has been my experience that the same can be said about the social fields she touches. Scribing is a social art that no one can practice alone. It requires inner cultivation and refinement, which Kelvy has mastered. This book is a guide to this deeper territory. Enjoy!

—C. Otto Scharmer

introduction

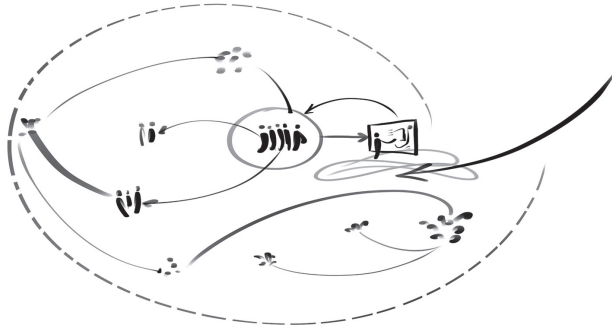
Each of our gestures, scribed on a wall or enacted in daily life, matters to the preservation and evolution of our species.

Scribing, one form of gesture, is a visual practice. An artist maps out ideas while people talk, and they can see a picture unfold right in front of their eyes. The drawing establishes connections within content, aids with insight, and supports decision-making. It's essentially a language that weaves words and pictures to facilitate group learning and cultural memory.



“Generative scribing” advances this discipline by extending the range of the practitioner to an entire ecosystem, while drawing with an attunement to energy. A generative scribe calls particular attention to an emerging reality that is brought to life by, and for, the social field in which it's created. No picture exists outside the context of the system in conversation, and the system's comprehension of itself is incomplete without the reflective representation and aid that the picture offers. It's a participatory, reciprocal, and procreative relationship.

Generative scribing is a visual practice unique in our age, a distinct art form of the 21st century, functioning in the moment, across cultural boundaries, and as a device for social seeing.



Because of its interactive and co-creative nature, generative scribing offers one access route to a sacred way of being, where the spirit of our humanity prevails over any individual agenda. Like witnesses of a solar eclipse at a pond, who share each other's special eyeglasses and swim together in muted waters, our spirits have an opportunity to revive and see anew because of common context. Drawing live, amongst a group of people, scribes make the human condition visible, tangible, known. In a way, we provide a setting, like a pond, for insight to occur.

But wait, what is the story behind scribing?

Scribing is a contemporary visual practice with roots in the Bay Area of California in the early 1970s. It is often defined as a practice that makes the unknown manifest through pictures, maps, diagrams, and models.¹ David Sibbet, founder of The Grove Consultants International, originated the terms “Group GraphicsSM” and the generic term “graphic facilitation” to describe methods that use visuals interactively to facilitate group understanding in organizational contexts.²

1 Robert Horn, “Visual Language and Converging Technologies in the Next 10–15 Years (and Beyond),” Paper prepared for the National Science Foundation Conference on Converging Technologies, December 2001.

2 David Sibbet, “A Graphic Facilitation Retrospective,” <http://davidsibbet.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/GF-RetrospectiveUpdated.pdf>.

There are many cousins of scribing, each of which slightly varies the live drawing approach. One is “graphic recording,” often a more literal means of pairing words and pictures, with an aim to mirror and map content. Other offshoots of the original practice have now-familiar terms such as sketchnoting, doodling, and mind mapping, to name a few—and all have found unique uses, markets, and applications. And I'd be remiss to omit the intersection with animation, motion graphics, cartooning, and even virtual reality, which have added dimensionality and access to the core profession in mind-boggling numbers.³

Practitioners in this field have come to learn the work in clear generational waves that I name in this manner:

1. **1970s: 1st Wave Originators** – like Sibbet, Jennifer Landau, and founding members of Grove Consultants along with Michael Doyle of Interaction Associates. (California, USA)
2. **1980s: 2nd Wave Originators** – Jim Channon, Matt Taylor, and Bryan Coffman with MG Taylor Corporation. (Colorado, USA)
3. **1990s: 3rd Wave Early Adopters** – those who learned with the originators and helped further seed the field (USA), those who started applying the practice within management consulting, organizational change, and not-for-profits. (+Canada, Europe)
4. **2000s: 4th Wave Early Majority** – those still learning from the previous generations in a hands-on manner, employing markers and physical wall surface and also starting to incorporate digital technologies. (+Australia)

3 Andrew Park, the extremely talented founder of Cognitive, invented the now ubiquitous whiteboard animation method, most widely known through the RSA Animate series that has received millions of views on YouTube. See the Cognitive website: www.wearecognitive.com.

5. **2010s: 5th Wave Self-Directed Majority** – people learning about the practice on their own, from books and videos by those who came up in the first four waves. (+Central and South America, Middle East, India, Africa, Asia)
6. **2017– : 6th Wave Collaborative Majority, Innovators, Questers** – people crossing regional boundaries to share best practices and evolve the art form; weaving indigenous, wisdom, and spiritual traditions into the existing visual practices to raise consciousness around the path of human evolution.

According to one of my earliest mentors, Bryan Coffman, the current use of the term “scribing” goes back at least as far as 1981, when knowledge workers who drew on walls during collaborative sessions were called “wall scribes.”⁴ As he once shared, “Scribes in Egypt kept the real story of what happened. Their word for the role was *Sesh*.”⁵

According to Wikipedia, Seshat was the goddess of wisdom, knowledge, and credited with inventing writing. “Usually, she is shown holding a palm stem, bearing notches to denote the recording of the passage of time . . . She was also depicted holding other tools and, often, holding the knotted cords that were stretched to survey land and structures.”

I find this fascinating, considering that the current role of the scribe layers directly onto the original meaning. We mark the passage of time and delineate structure within, and for, cultures—albeit with new methods. Each drawing maps some

territory we are helping a social body to understand, whether it be a company’s business strategy, a city’s public land development, or a family’s move to a new country.

Prehistoric cave paintings also served to record and chart the presence and activity of species. Native American medicine wheels, Tibetan Buddhist sand mandalas, and the dreamtime influence in Aboriginal art—along with many other ancient and contemporary co-created visual formats—include a spiritual approach to social art, recognizing the connection between humans and the life force all around us.

I have gravitated to the term “scribe” to define what I am and do because of this harkening back to something primordial, something that seems timeless and lasting, something that provides a service that cuts across any one lifetime.

Scribes serve as artistic aids in shared seeing and human navigation.

Scribes represent information, in as neutral a way as possible, to craft living artifacts. We draw, then document the work digitally, then let go of the original pieces by handing them off to clients; and sometimes we even wipe down our work surfaces immediately after a group ends their conversation.

The process is fleeting. The final digital images end up on people’s smartphones, in documents, reprinted as posters, in reports, in library displays, and as handouts for those not in the room during the actual making of the piece.

But the physical artifact is a mere echo of the primary value, which is in-the-moment collective sourcing and reflection. In the process of making these artifacts, a group can see a course to take, find their direction. Thus the aid of the scribe is to induce greater vision, toward action.

⁴ “Wall Scribing: One or two Graphics Team members listen to the conversation and draw what they hear. This is a form of instant feedback and visual translation for participants.” *DesignShop Staff Manual, Athenaeum International, Version 3.3* (Boulder: MG Taylor Corporation, 1991), p. 37.

⁵ Donald Frazer, *Hieroglyphs and Arithmetic of the Ancient Egyptian Scribes: Version 1*. “The profession at first associated with the goddess Seshat is the source of the Egyptian word ‘Sesh,’ meaning scribe.”

Scribing is an inherently participatory social art form.

The painter Wassily Kandinsky viewed art as a liberating device that could bring the inner life alive through pure line, shape, and color.⁶ Scribing, going beyond an abstract two-dimensional plane, activates the inner life of the social field, the unseen—yet felt—territory of human interaction.

Historically, two-dimensional art making has been a private, sheltered, creative act. Artists paint pictures, usually alone in a studio, based on their reality. Sometimes the pictures are exhibited, purchased, displayed in a home or public setting, and viewed. Sometimes they prompt conversation.

Scribing, as a social art, is an exposed, witnessed, feedback-dependent activity that only takes place within a group of people. It gives shape to human conditions in an organic way, in rhythm with what wants to be voiced and seen. It depends not on one artist's view, but on the input of many views that come together through the creative act.

When I work at a wall with a participant-audience at my back, the engagement is with both their content and their energy.⁷ By responding to what I am hearing and sensing in an immediate way, live, in front of a group, what I create can be quickly assimilated into the conversation. Thus, through its reflective mirroring, the drawing has the power to immediately influence and transform the thinking in a room.

⁶ Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (London: Dover Publications, 1977), republished from the original *The Art of Spiritual Harmony* (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1914).

⁷ I often refer to those engaging with artwork as a "participant-audience" to intentionally help people think about an audience not as passive receivers of an artist's expression but as active players in the artwork's creation.

There is a reinforcing loop between the actual drawing and the receiving of the drawing; the loop expands the understanding that a room of people share and thereby expands their sense of possibility. (See appendix Figure 1.)



This art has life only because a communal desire for sensemaking exists. Someone, or a team, has decided to bring in a scribe to help people see what it is they are talking about.

What takes form through the hand of the scribe is the content that's meant to come through, no more and no less. What lands on a surface—no matter how well thought-through—is as far as a system can go at that moment. It reflects a slice of time.

Sailors cut through fog at a speed that allows them to hear the gonging buoys guiding their way. Chiropractors adjust a neck within the limits of the person's vertebral mobility. We can only move as fast as conditions allow, within a range of readiness. Scribes attune to those limits and track that movement.

I listen. I draw. You see. You speak. I listen I draw you see you speak. You see I listen you speak I draw. You speak I draw we see we listen. That's how it feels. It's fluid.

Scribing offers a relational way of seeing.

In 1933, color theorist Josef Albers arrived at Black Mountain College in North Carolina knowing few English words, but enough to convey his purpose for teaching: “To open eyes.”⁸

My own inquiry into the relatedness of things began in earnest when reading and applying Albers’s seminal book, *Interaction of Color*, during a university class called “Color, Form & Space.” Professor Norman Daly challenged us: “Prove color is not independent.” Through one homework assignment—placing two equivalent colors each within a different, larger, colored area—my eyes and mind were blown open by the very same grey appearing purple against yellow, then green against red.

As a painter, I started to attune to the relationships of color and objects everywhere. Beige against indigo: a moth, pinned against a screen, in darkness, seeking light. The inquiry extended to non-material things, too. Ideas side-by-side (my view, your view) . . . how to represent those juxtapositions? People side-by-side (my body heat, your body heat) . . . how to convey the vibrational field?

Then, in 1995, when working on a collaborative art project in San Francisco, I was introduced to scribing through Matt and Gail Taylor—an architect and an educator who developed a methodology for employing group genius in solving complex problems.⁹ They invited me to apprentice at a DesignShop™ for NASA, a collaborative, immersive, three-day program to reimagine the use of wind tunnels. Most of what I remember

about that week is the impressive team of a dozen people that largely self-organized to facilitate over a hundred anxious and eager government employees of all ranks by arranging space, setting chairs, writing assignments, providing information, explaining concepts, documenting, filming, playing music—and yes, scribing! And, I recall being amazed at how art could have a role in shaping group thinking.

The environment itself extended my fascination with relation: over three days, participants wrote and drew out their concepts onto 6 x 8 foot rolling dry-erase walls, making thinking visible to everyone in the room. Through the placement of these large walls side-by-side, each containing ideas unique to individuals or breakout groups, suddenly I saw a format that extended my study of color into team dynamics.

I saw a way of representing multiple ideas from multiple people in one place, to stimulate overarching awareness and insight. One person’s idea (like a grey piece of paper) had different resonance or dissonance depending on whose idea it neighbored.

It was like walking into a cathedral full of mosaic, where each piece of colored glass, though unique, loses itself in the vastness of the overall creation. The full array of those dry-erase walls seemed like a passage to a new kind of human interaction.

The assemblage of the parts—like colors, like mosaic tiles, like walls hosting ideas side-by-side, like bodies in a room talking and listening—transcends the current known reality.

⁸ *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College, 1933–1957*, exhibit at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA, October 2015–January 2016.

⁹ Gayle Pergamit and Chris Peterson, *Leaping the Abyss: Putting Group Genius to Work* (Hilton Head: knOwhere Press, 1997).

Society is in desperate need of seeing.

As Albers sought to open eyes, I write this book to advance the capacity of seeing. We are a species edging toward extinction if we do not address and change our behaviors to turn around global trends—including climate warming, gross inequality, and perpetuated violence, among others.

Maybe this kind of urgency for survival has been felt perennially throughout history, during other cycles of destruction or contraction that humankind has faced and caused (the bubonic plague, the Holocaust, . . .)¹⁰ But certainly this is a unique moment in history, with a unique necessity to address our destructive actions in order to preserve life.

With the aid of seeing, together we can more clearly choose and chart our path. Our views become shared and solvable in a very different manner than if each of us exists within our own individual sphere of understanding.

It's a time not only to see what we immediately face in the short term, but also to orient with a long view. It is a time to access the positive potential in ourselves and those around us, without apology, with determination.

It is a time, with open eyes, to see clearly and act.

Today's great challenges call us to (re)arrange our interior dimensions to more adequately meet current, outer realities.

Working from the inside out, then, by unpacking my own experience over the past thirty or so years, I serve up generative scribing as one practice to aid with this larger shift.

This book is aimed at current and future scribes, with an aspiration to expand the possibility of the art form and the impact of our efforts.

It is for a broader audience, too, for those whose “markers” take shape as kitchen utensils, gardening rakes, community leagues, city planning, national policy-making—you name it. By replacing words like “draw” with “cook,” or “wall” with “table,” the meaning can translate to a variety of contexts.

This is a book for anyone who cares about how we exist together as human beings, for anyone who wants to explore their interior functioning, for anyone who seeks to approach the world anew.

¹⁰ Tobias Stone, “History Tells Us What May Happen Next with Brexit & Trump,” 2016, Medium.com (<https://medium.com/@tswriting/history-tells-us-what-will-happen-next-with-brexit-trump-a3fed154714>).

about this book

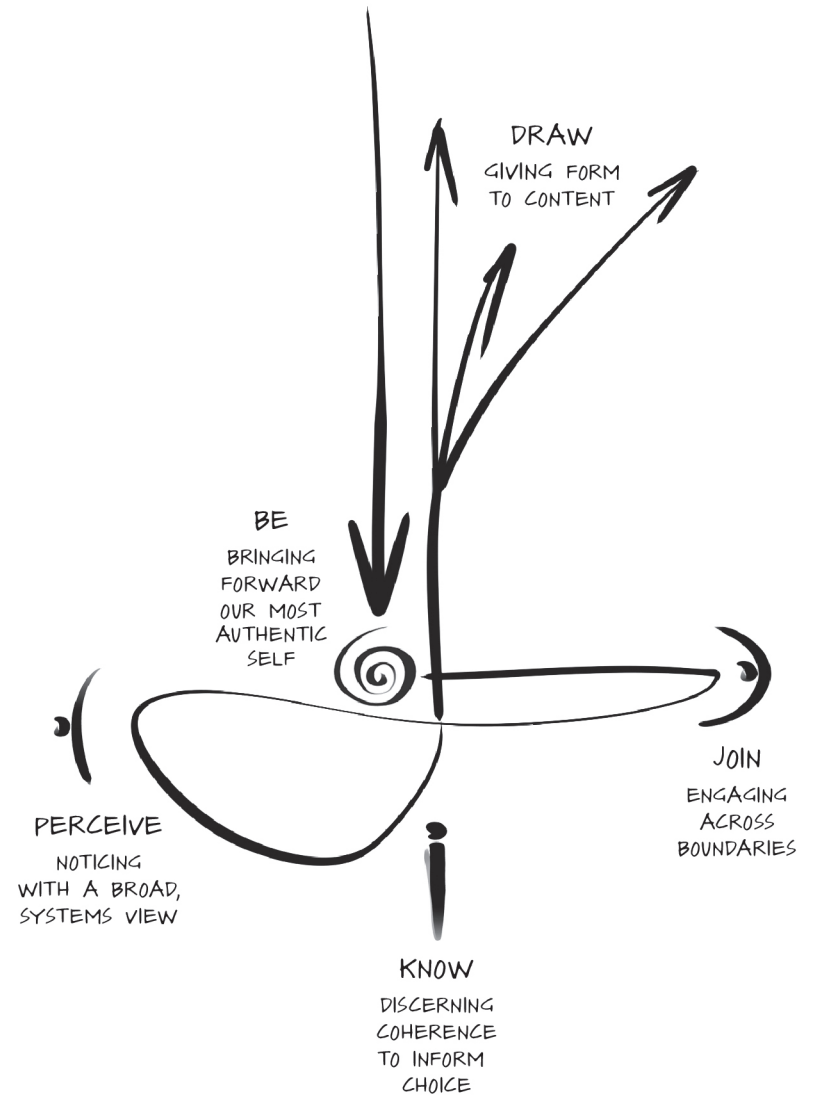
This volume is not intended as an instruction manual, but rather as an approach to the practice of generative scribing, which I consider to be one discipline among many that can help us collectively orient.

In the following pages you will find numerous references to pioneers of collaborative design, dialogue, system dynamics, presencing, and related social technologies. Scribing alongside practitioners in these fields has offered me a unique opportunity to convey their findings visually, while sharing an ongoing inquiry into human potential. Most figures in the appendix, which I refer to throughout the book, result from these partnerships.

I often use “we” to refer to myself and my fellow scribes and the ideas coming from discussions we’ve shared. In doing so I also intentionally embrace an ecosystem mindset, choosing to write from a “future-state” of shared, heightened awareness. In other parts, the use of “I” refers to my own practice, which can tend to have a spiritual, mystic leaning.

A primary model of practice structures this collection. The model provides an overview and explains the various frameworks that have influenced my development. Each section after that addresses a primary domain within the model. And in each domain, I map some key aspects of inner cultivation that support the more visible act of drawing.

To the right is a quick overview of the book’s flow:



When we scribe, we integrate all of these practices in fluid motion. It's not a step-by-step progression; rather it's a kind of dance sequence, an improvisational choreography, that happens during each instant of our crafting.

The book can be read in the same non-linear way. I encourage you—the participant-reader—to jump around at will, mark up the pages, and dog-ear the corners with gusto. Pass over what you don't need today. Find what resonates and dwell there.

May this slim volume greet you like the promise of a crisp spring morning: buds on branches, flocks of migrating geese overhead, drops of water falling off icicles in final melt, with longer days of light to come.

Absorb it all with ease, in right timing, with wonderment.

*model of
practice*

model of practice

As we approach an action, we prepare. Just as a cake doesn't go in the oven before all the ingredients are combined, a scribe doesn't draw before processing what is being said.

It's a swift processing that stays in motion, until the very last word in a room is spoken. A scribe's preparations happen on multiple tracks, as if we are making cookies *and* muffins in rapid sequence, while simultaneously mixing and baking.

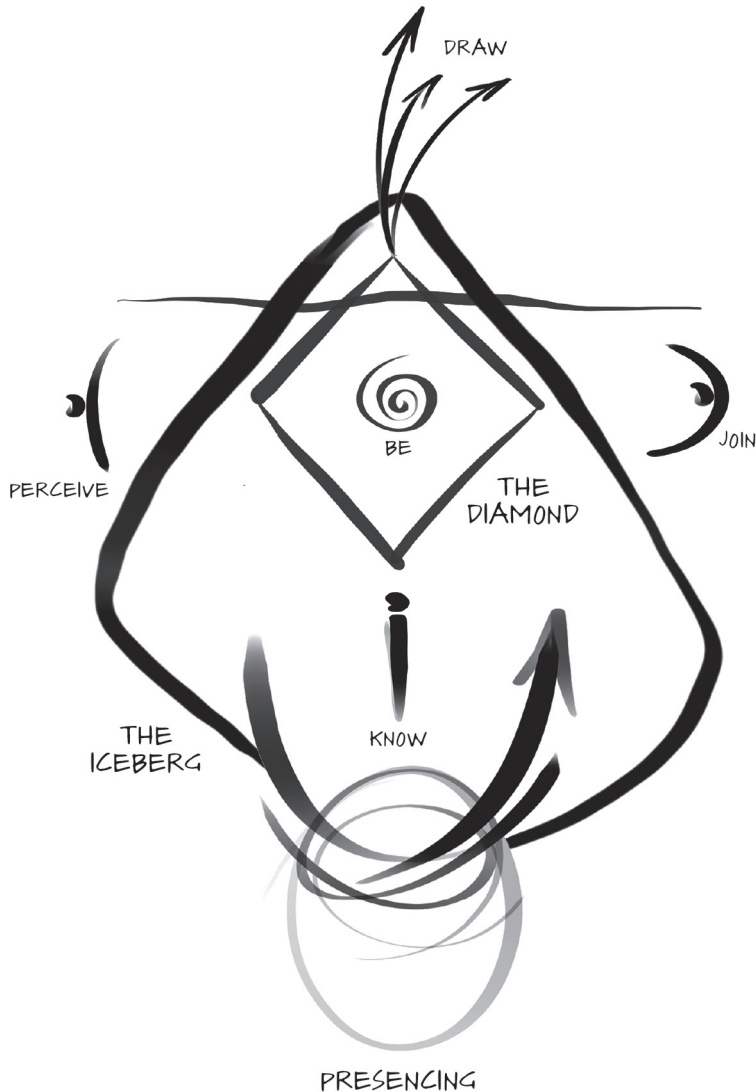
This model of practice addresses the internal coordination required to process multiple inputs and draw in real time, attending inward and outward at once.

I have developed this model through numerous attempts—over twenty years working alongside masters of human, organizational, and social dynamics—to explain scribing.

One way to explain what we do is: “We draw while people talk.” And in that “while” are the active components of this framework: the domains Be, Join, Perceive, Know, and Draw. These domains are held within a “container,” where trust breeds confidence, informed by the field and by source.

In this section I describe three primary influences that have helped shape these domains and that inform my model:

1. **The Diamond**, to support stance and action
2. **The Iceberg**, to enhance perspective
3. **Presencing**, to place oneself in the emerging future—related to containers, field, and source



This thinking and this model are not meant to discourage the strength of the hand and the value of the production of illustrative graphics. Indeed, that aspect of our craft is critical; it is, after all, the visual language that ultimately communicates with a participant-audience.

Rather, this thinking is meant as a foundation for scribes who want to learn and expand their practice, to better articulate aspects of what scribes do, for themselves and for others.

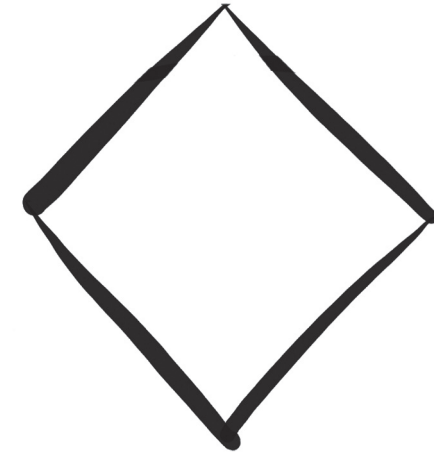
With this framework in mind, we can manage our own balance of domains and development.

We do this while standing in front of a wall or board, processing vast amounts of information, and between sessions as we reflect and renew.

For those of you who are not scribes, the following pages can inform any design or facilitative act. Having a difficult conversation with a partner? That requires softening, attending, and container work. Want to understand how to approach a problem differently? Frame and reframe. Exploring a new career path? Discerning and envisioning will be relevant.

For scribes and non-scribes alike, any activity that calls for thoughtful intentionality can be enriched by this guide.

the diamond



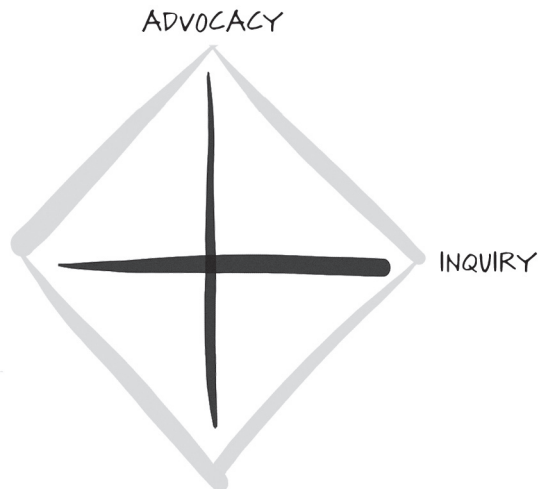
The diamond is the main structure of the model of practice (and of this book). Researchers in the fields of human and organizational development have used this shape to anchor behaviors in time, to offer a view into team and personal dynamics.¹¹ I've learned the following variations in different contexts and am repeatedly surprised at the depth of practice they provide, especially when layered to reinforce one another.

With all diamond frameworks, we seek BALANCE—to bring in what is missing between the parts.

¹¹ Behaviors "in time" are sets of actions within a bound parameter, such as a presentation or conversation. This differs from behaviors "over time," which encompass changing conditions and outcomes. I write more about this in the chapter on time.

advocacy and inquiry

The origin of this diamond framework tracks back to Chris Argyris and Don Schön, who presented “advocacy” and “inquiry” as two primary axes, or stances, we occupy in conversation. I have found that these stances underpin everything a scribe hears: either people are advocating—stating a view, staking a claim; or they are inquiring—asking a question, one to which there is not an immediate answer. An entire wall of drawing can be organized on these positions alone.



In facilitating conversation, we want to be able to ride on either axis. If many voices are stating their points of view, we want to be skilled enough to invite in other perspectives. If a group is wandering in circles, we want to be confident enough to make a suggestion in one direction.

This applies to scribing, too. If I notice that the axes are lopsided, and I know the group seeks to have healthy conversation, I will draw up what is missing in order to prompt a balance.

If many voices are stating different points of view (“I suggest . . .” “That’s not going to work . . .”), I might write them all out in equal measure. OR, I can listen closely for the few questions being raised (“I wonder if . . .?” “Have we considered . . .?”) and emphasize those on the wall, choosing to decrease the advocacy by visually enhancing the inquiry. (See appendix Figure 2.)

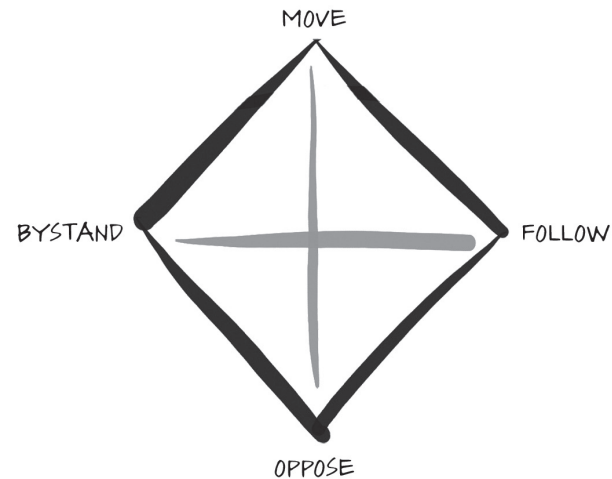
Likewise, if a group is wandering in circles (“I’m not sure . . .” “This doesn’t make sense . . .”), I can highlight the flow, albeit circular; OR, I can limit tracking questions and listen for the few voices that propose a solution to make sure that those are boldly noted: “Let’s try . . .”

How we represent the proportion of advocacy and inquiry influences how participant-viewers understand their conversation.

People who notice a board full of single statements could wonder about the absence of questions, relatedness, and spaciousness. Likewise, people who see only open-ended phrases, connective arrows, and lots of blank space might want more definition. Again, the possibility here is in representing both advocacy *and* inquiry, while reflecting a balance of perspectives.

structural dynamics

Systems psychologist David Kantor's research in family dynamics led to a theory of structural dynamics that uncovers conversational patterns and also maps on the diamond.¹²



I learned about Kantor's extremely applicable Four Players in Conversation model when working closely with William Isaacs at the consulting company Dialogos in the late '90s and early 2000s.¹³ My role during repeated cycles of a year-long program called "Leadership for Collective Intelligence" was primarily to document dialogic processes in words (not visually map them). This task required hours of focused attention on what people said and in what sequence, which now deeply influences how I listen.

¹² David Kantor, *Reading the Room: Group Dynamics for Coaches and Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012).

¹³ See also William Isaacs, *Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1999).

In Kantor's model, there are four actions, or speech acts, that combine in all verbal interaction:

- **Move**, to initiate and set direction
- **Follow**, to support and complete an initiative
- **Oppose**, to challenge and correct
- **Bystand**, to witness and offer perspective

There is a big difference between "I think it's time to start planning for the next cycle." (Move) and "That sounds like a good idea!" (Follow) and "We can't start now; the team is not ready." (Oppose) and "Have we covered all our bases here?" (Bystand).

These actions are directly applicable to scribing. Referring to the above phrases, I might think to draw a timeline for Move. For Follow, a symbol of a person holding up the timeline. For Oppose, a cluster of people far from the timeline, facing another direction. For Bystand, a series of empty ovals, or some other shape to represent needed planning, between the cluster of people and the timeline.

Applied to scribing, the Four Players in Conversation model is a critical tool for noticing individual and group positions.

This tool can help us understand what is dominant and absent when one person is speaking, in any context. Some speakers are strong Movers or Opposers yet rarely question their own thinking and invite almost no audience engagement. Likewise, some speakers go to great lengths to demonstrate reflection, bringing outside learning into the room but struggling to anchor one topic. And some have a balanced blend of skills: making a case, sharing context, admitting to gaps in reasoning, seeking feedback, and standing firm in their convictions.

When scribing for a group—during a planning session or a conversation, for example—this framework also helps reveal patterns of actions and stuck dynamics. For instance, people get locked on the Advocacy axis in “point-counterpoint” (Move-Oppose-Move-Oppose) or drift in a spiral of inaction as if in a “hall of mirrors” (Move-Bystand-Bystand-Bystand) or only see their own point of view in “serial monologues” (Move-Move-Move-Move) or politely/blindly follow the leader in “courteous compliance” (Move-Follow-Follow-Follow).

Once we become aware of a particular sequence, we can listen closely for, and draw, what is missing in order to loosen or tighten the structure. In effect, as an active bystander, we notice the action that is presenting as weak, and strengthen it by how we represent the content.

If three strong movers speak in a row, each for five minutes, and then one person asks a question in just a few seconds, I would probably take key words from the first three contributions and add the whole question to the picture.

If people are meandering in meaning and keep wondering why something is happening in a certain way, and then one person suggests an action, I might synthesize the wondering into one sentence or image and then write the proposed direction up in a larger font, maybe a darker color for emphasis.

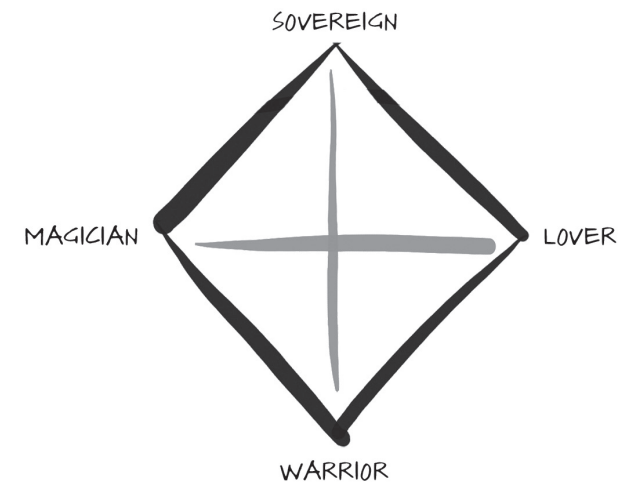
Another application of this model is detecting when a group's dynamic shifts from serial behaviors into dialogic flow. Rather than each individual speaking from their own view, each starts to move into a creative orientation, with increased inquiry into a collective, shared meaning.

This shift into flow serves, and is served by, scribing. When I sense this happening, I will start to draw an integrated rope of language over one thread, and by reflecting this

coherence, it's reinforced. (See appendix Figure 3.) In this way, the art is social, since the resulting meaning of the flow of words is directly informed by multiple people.

leadership archetypes

Cliff Barry, with help from several others, founded a body of knowledge called Shadow Work[®],¹⁴ which expands the diamond to address personal development through an understanding of certain archetypes, based on the work of Carl Jung.¹⁵



¹⁴ The term Shadow Work[®] is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office by Shadow Work Licensing, LLC and is used here with permission from Cliff Barry and Shadow Work Licensing (see www.shadowwork.com).

¹⁵ “Carl Jung understood archetypes as universal, archaic patterns and images that derive from the collective unconscious. They are autonomous and hidden forms which are transformed once they enter consciousness and are given particular expression by individuals and their cultures.” Wikipedia, “Jungian archetypes.”

I learned about the deeper application of archetypes from Barbara Cecil, Glennifer Gillespie, and Beth Jandernoa—co-founders of the Circle of Seven—in their Coming Into Your Own program for women: see www.ashlandinstitute.org.

This is an extremely subtle approach to include in scribing, where emotional gateways provide access to the various energies:

- **Sadness**, which accesses the Lover
- **Fear**, which accesses the Magician
- **Anger**, which accesses the Warrior
- **Joy**, which accesses the Sovereign

I have started each main section of this book with a chapter on one of these gateways, as sadness helps access joining, fear helps open perceiving, anger helps open knowing, and joy leads the way to drawing.

In practice, if I feel my heart swell or begin to race, if I am picking up on absence or loss, it often indicates the Lover's longing for connection somewhere in the room. I might address this by drawing in a more fluid manner, making sure to link ideas in order to increase the quality of relation.

When I sense that there is a lot of apprehension or confusion in the room—the gateway to fear—I will try to draw in a way that identifies patterns, that is clear about facts, and that presents specific options. I increase the Magician energy in the room by increasing perspective.

If there seems to be a lot of frustration in the room, I will take it as a sign that the Warrior is strongly present; therefore, I'll make sure to note decisions and concerns. People usually become angry because they care about something. Focusing on the emotion alone does a disservice to a meaningful viewpoint or a valuable contribution that someone has to offer.

And when I feel a lot of joy in the room, it's an indication of the Sovereign's energy of blessing, direction, and initiative. I will

make certain to include the quality of expansion this energy brings, perhaps by writing a phrase starting with something like "Let's . . ." I'll also make an effort to draw concise next steps, a setup for action.

No one emotion or archetype is any better or worse than the others. Each one is a lens through which we see where people are coming from, and where—with our aid—they might go.

The application of the archetypes by a scribe is quite invisible work, and I often wonder if anyone in a room even knows it's happening. But I aspire to consciously balance the wall with the energy in the room, considering that one influences and reflects on the other.

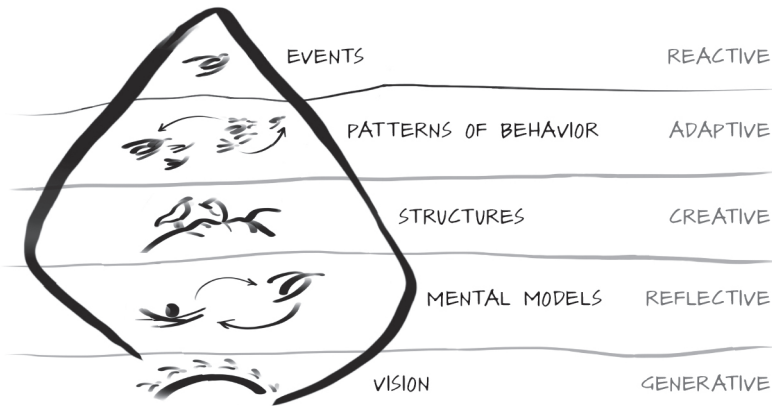


All of these influences—Advocacy and Inquiry, The Four Player Model, and the Leadership Archetypes (and others not even mentioned, but of the same family)—underpin my interpretation of the diamond model.

I have tried to synthesize and simplify the terminology by using the words Join, Know, Perceive, Draw, and Be—at the center—in order to get to the essence of the domains as they apply to generative scribing.

All aspects of the diamond are needed for a complete practice. Each of us is strong in some and weak in others. Becoming aware of this imbalance and working with it, in ourselves and in service of others, is part of the learning path toward personal and professional development.

the iceberg



The Iceberg Model, which conceptually overlays the diamond, provides a lens through which to identify leverage points for systems and the conversations that take place within them.

Edgar Schein conceived this framing of organizational culture in the early 1980s with three main layers of varying visibility: Artifacts, Espoused Values, and Assumptions. Peter Senge further developed and advanced the concept, which is now a cornerstone of organizational development around the world.¹⁶

The 10 percent of an iceberg that is visible above the water line represents events and action. In scribing, this is the actual drawing, the artifact, that represents what we hear.

¹⁶ Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1990).

The social art of scribing requires this artifact, this thing, since it comes to represent a group's co-creation and it functions to carry the group's thinking forward. If a participant-body cannot *see* what is being born of their words, then it will not be able to reflect and act on their common understanding.

Even more, the social art of scribing requires that the practitioner can recognize patterns, structures, and theories in use, as well as sense potential. This awareness helps us to understand the context behind any one word or idea, and brings both the conditions and aspiration of the system to light.

The premise of this book is that the 90 percent below the water line is as important to cultivate as what scribes draw with their ink. Especially when one considers that scribing is a social art, it is essential to address the dynamics driving the current state of interactions on, and with, the planet.

Leverage to influence social seeing and systems change increases as we move toward the bottom of the iceberg.

Diving below the water line to the 90 percent, I like to think of the layers of the iceberg in this way, from top to bottom: Patterns of Behavior, Structures, Mental Models, and (for some, though an alternative interpretation) Vision. This order correlates with action modes that are adaptive, creative, reflective, and generative.¹⁷

Understanding the different levels of the framework within any one situation or dynamic, we can see—and represent—an expanded picture of reality.

¹⁷ Daniel Kim, *It Begins Here: Organizational Learning Journey Toolkit* (Singapore: Cobee Publishing House, 2009).

I refer to these tiers frequently to guide my attention while listening. An initial step is to diagnose from where a person, panel, team, or whole group is speaking. What are they aiming to achieve? And how can I intentionally scribe to facilitate dialogue within their comfort zone and expand it, if that would be helpful?

I consider scribing one tier deeper than the current reality in the room. If a speaker is talking about events, or speaking factually, I become curious about the behaviors that caused those events. If a group is functioning at a behavioral level, I wonder about the structures in play.

This thought process is mostly going on in my mind and is not necessarily visible in the drawing. But my current belief is that attending in this way can actually deepen the broader conversation and bring to the surface aspects of thinking and connection that might not initially be obvious, or even known.

Applying the Iceberg Model while listening and drawing is one of the practices that can shift the scribe’s stance from “visual note taking” to “graphic facilitation” to “generative scribing.”

To work with an emerging future reality, we not only reflect back what is being said—the already known—but also engage in a co-discovery *with* the system in a room.

Here is a breakdown of the model, as applied to visual practice. Keep in mind that I am describing it from the top to the bottom. The drawings included in the appendix, though, follow the delivery of a presentation, which came out in another order (Structure, Patterns of Behavior, Events, Mental Models, and Vision). I have mapped this image to show how I keep this model in mind while drawing and connecting concepts.

Events are like data, actual occurrences that we see, above the metaphoric water line, like noticing a lone bird flying.

In the spoken word, I think of events as individual notes—words or phrases, single statements, ideas, comments, parts. These combine to tell stories and can be most readily represented through stand-alone pictures, such as the ovals in appendix Figure 7. This example, and the ones that follow, come from a climate simulation led by professor John Sterman, director of the MIT System Dynamics Group.¹⁸

Patterns of behavior convey moving parts within structures. A flock is a formation based on a need, such as the need to head south for winter. We can look for flock-like patterns in content itself and in the ways people speak. In Figure 6, Sterman was describing the increase of CO₂ emissions that leads to ocean acidification, sea-level rise, freshwater stress, and drought.

Structure shows how pieces of the picture relate to support and drive behavior. Connections across gaps become apparent, and it’s the scribe’s place to organize them into an order that people can perceive.

We don’t look for one bird; we look for two, for three, four, forty birds and then inquire into what holds them together. Are they siblings? From different flocks? Do they face each other, or turn away? Join? Avoid? Does one bird communicate to another bird on another branch? In another tree? What are the conditions of the tree? Protected? Exposed? The answers to these questions are the components of the structure *inside* a story. Every piece of the picture offers context.

18 See C-ROADS climate policy simulator, Climate Interactive, www.climateinteractive.org.

Sterman started his simulation by naming “fossil fuel-driven economic growth” and deforestation, which—in breaking down the picture—I interpret as structures that lead to increased CO₂ emissions. (See appendix Figure 5.)

Mental Models are images we carry in our heads of how things work, to help us explain why things function as they do. For a scribe, it’s challenging to make explicit the mental models of a speaker, since we are representing what we perceive, influenced by our beliefs. When someone says, “This will lead to market domination,” all kinds of bells and whistles go off in my brain. My own thinking, based on my experience, colors what I hear from others. It’s unavoidable.

In the iceberg drawing opening this chapter, I drew an egg and a bird to represent the mental puzzle that asks “Which comes first?” and challenges our thinking about where life begins.

Sometimes my thinking aligns with that of the presenter—such as Professor Sterman and his concern about climate change. (See appendix Figure 8.) We agree that humans buying diesel-fueled boats came before rising sea levels. Sometimes understanding the reasoning behind another’s view is a challenge. No matter how many versions of “it’s cyclical” I hear regarding climate, I can never seem to accept that position.

This territory is delicate; there are beliefs in the room, and there are (possibly different) beliefs in us. As scribes, we try to accurately represent what we hear and resist layering in our own thinking.

That said, with generative scribing, where we operate with awareness from an emerging sense of possibility, we can help reveal bias in order to activate reflection, and, perhaps, shift mindsets. We do this for ourselves and, as scribes, for others through our drawings. We assume that views are not fixed.

Vision is the deeper territory of aspiration, hope, calling, that which can set the tone for all else, pushing upward through the iceberg to touch the other levels. A generative scribe can sense this, and then hold the possibility in spirit (even without drawing) to join the system as its future self, and share a hope for the vision to take shape through the thinking and action of the people in the room.

I usually try to leave space on a surface for vision to come into the picture. (See appendix Figure 9.) And if it does not enter the room on the day of the session, then it wasn’t meant to, and perhaps it will at another time.

It’s relevant to note that the example I use in the appendix is one I have parsed out years after actually making the drawing. Originally, my only aim was to track the simulation!

Now, I realize the indispensable service this framework provides during every stage of a session—in preparation with clients, while drawing, and when digitally enhancing work for distribution—to notice, and choose, where to focus attention.

presencing



“Presencing, the blending of sensing and presence, means to connect with the Source of the highest future possibility and to bring it into the now.”¹⁹

A colleague from the Presencing Institute, Marian Goodman, has described it as “holding compassion for consciousness as it tries to find its bearings,” which very much resonates with my personal experience.

¹⁹ C. Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2009), p. 163. I refer many times in this book to the work of Otto Scharmer, with whom I have collaborated closely for over a decade, and whose thinking I find inextricably woven with my own.

I consider presencing to represent *being with*. It is our place at the center of the diamond and can infuse all parts of our practice. It can be experienced in a moment of time, and over time, depending on our ability to sustain a connection to our purest and most authentic Self.

The social technology of presencing is a way of being, and is foundational to a generative scribing practice.

Presencing is acting in the moment, as called for by an emerging, unfolding reality. Combining presencing with scribing leads me to pause before drawing, to expand my attention to someone’s voice, the space around it, the system, the social field. In the moment before lifting a pen, I imagine the extended range of connection between people in the room and outside it, the meaning of the session in their culture, the context of their work in the context of society. I also consider our moment in time and our placement in the span of time.

Through the lens of presencing, we can represent a new possibility coming to light and chart a path from the past to the present to the future which holds that very possibility.

While presencing, I listen to my most in-tune self for guidance. I engage all of my senses to discern when to move and when to be still, when to start and when to stop. This can be by drawing or by making a comment, offering a hug, joining or leaving a group; it can be with partnership, with any kind of life decision.

Today, scribing is an individual two-dimensional art form (technology will undoubtedly shift this in the coming decades), and scribes can access presencing in themselves, individually.

But if the room is not aware of shifts in consciousness, scribes can only go so far with their own process; a limit in collective awareness limits the depth of the manifestation.

Likewise, the deeper the understanding a group has of presencing, the richer the container—the shared holding space—and the more qualitatively robust the drawing that results. (See appendix Figures 10 and 11.)

In graphic recording, or graphic facilitation even, the primary client need is usually to have as much literal content as possible and function with tangible knowns. But in generative scribing, it's essential to access this place of presencing, since it informs the very essence of what is trying to take shape from the *unknown*.

The times when I have stopped drawing, put my arms down, turned around to reconnect with a speaker, paused, tuned in to the moment—whether to notice rain on the roof or light bouncing on a wall at a certain angle or the cool temperature of the air—are when my internal rhythm starts to slow down, to make way for a finer sensibility to come online. My aperture of awareness opens, and more of the moment can come *through* me.

When experiencing shared presencing, there is an extreme harmony in the air—everything falling into place—and my drawing naturally mirrors that cohesion. Someone speaks a word, and I have already started to write it. I have an inclination to make a large gesture, and do, and then minutes later a speaker will add a new major topic that makes sense of my arc.

Presencing is not exercising intuition or projecting some sort of ideal state. Rather (in my interpretation) it is aligning within wholeness and, from that place, revealing the parts necessary to engage forward movement.

containers



Around the diamond, the iceberg, and presencing—supporting these states of being and diagnostic methods—are what I've already referred to in this book as containers: holding spaces for places, people, and states of the heart.

The weakness or strength of a container determines the likelihood for detrimental or successful conversation, for harmful or loving relations, for destructive or productive environments, for ill- or well-being.

In a way, just as ice forms from and melts back into a pond, containers provide energetic ground for life and death, for growth and decay. We serve as containers for others, and they for us. The stronger a container, the stronger the trust, the stronger the safety, the more that can be nourished, tended, grown, realized.

Here's an example. As my grandmother Margaret Bird was aging, at a point when she could only go outside with a walker and physical assistance, we would occasionally lunch at a local diner in New York City. She would ask me things about my life, about school, about my friends, about my studies, and she would marvel at the complexity of the world in which I lived. (This was 1984, so we can only imagine what she would say about our world today!)

What I recall most poignantly is the way she paid attention, seeming to hang on every word, and the way she made me feel safe and loved—loved no matter what I said, no matter what I had to share. I never felt judged. No matter what she thought about the details of my escapades, she listened closely, looked me in the eye, and continued to pursue an understanding of my life.

She provided a container, a space where I could see myself more clearly and grow as direct result of how she was holding me.

In my work as a scribe, I try to reinforce the container for the group. When a group heats up and fractures, the container needs to strengthen, to better support what wants to come to light. I don't do this by adding a specific line or word to a page, but by enhancing my quality of listening and building the group's trust in my very being. I turn around, and see the group, feel it, open my heart to the individuals, try to put myself in their seats, find human-to-human compassion, soften, expand.

Sometimes the container in the room is so strong that the scribe might be enveloped in its power. Our ability to "show up" increases because the room is holding us, in a way, as my grandmother held me so well, years ago. In this case, I notice the strength, thank the heaven and earth for the quality of the group, and draw with pure joy.

When my grandmother, somewhat hard of hearing and surely with many of her own personal concerns, was able to show up for me so completely, I was completely able to show up for her too. I could be more vulnerable because I felt safe. She brought out the purest part of me by how gracefully she held me in her own heart.

***Love, as a base note, is the ore,
and order, of the container.***

field

Finding a way into field . . .

“Field” can refer to a physical place, like a piece of land that holds a crop. And field can refer to an area of interest. In a social context, field also refers to a body of people and their interactions.

Field can even extend to the concept of “interbeing”—a term defined by Thich Nhat Hanh to convey the interconnectedness of all things:

“If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no water; without water, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. So the cloud is in here. The existence of this page is dependent on the existence of a cloud.”²⁰



With the notion of field in mind, we can consider the web of relations from which, into which, and for which we draw.

²⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1987), p. 53.

My grandfather Junius Bird was an archaeologist in Central and South America from the 1930s to the 1970s, where he discovered textiles that helped identify pre-ceramic cultures. Walking through a windowed entranceway outside the front door of his home, I would pass shelves of little objects—treasures brought back from faraway places, gifts from colleagues, and curiosities found down the street. Though only about ten feet long, it was a hall of wonder, full of handmade artifacts that offered transcendence to another time and place, another culture, to some human spirit other than my own.

Because of this early seeding, that objects embody life’s spirit, I have come to believe that scribed images can also contain and carry forward energy. What if, as generative scribes, we consider that each image we create holds and transfers a kind of spirituality? And what if we consider the field to be an energetic place from which we source spirit?

And what if the field is, more specifically, an energetic array of the interaction of all life—social, between people, and extending to all living matter—and it is from within that array that we draw?

As my grandfather dug up textiles from one kind of physical field to inform an understanding of human culture, generative scribes can intentionally create images that will inform current and future understanding of the human spirit.

Wassily Kandinsky defined the role of abstract art in the 20th century by writing: “The work of art mirrors itself upon the surface of our consciousness.”²¹ What artists create is a direct reflection of their interior condition.

²¹ Wassily Kandinsky, *Point and Line to Plane* (New York: Dover Publications, 1979). First translated in 1947 for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation from the original publication in 1926.

I propose that this is the century in which artists consciously extend our consideration from the spirit of one to the field of many.

We can represent planes of human interaction, yes, as in a stakeholder map or an organizational chart or a Venn diagram. And we can represent individual spirit.

We can also give language to an intangible—yet perceived—quality of interaction that exists around and between seemingly disparate parts (of species, of the planet.)

As generative scribes, we can seek to represent what is beyond images that characterize inner life or the literally spoken word. Our marks are not a series of impositions on a surface; instead they represent something inherent that arises *from* a surface and *from* the field.

Fields, therefore, inform form.

One day, musing on the visual representation of fields, I started remembering previous depictions: crosshatches, flecks, washes of color. Then my mind wandered away from the language describing field back to an experience of it, an *evocation* . . .

A summer's day with family in Bearsville, New York . . . a small flagstone patio near a meadow . . . milkweed in bloom, teased by light . . . lit . . . let . . . let to be of nature . . . let to be free.

And now, with a child's memory of complete oneness with people and the earth, with care for the development of the profession of visual practice, with concern for our social relations and behaviors on a heating planet, and aware of the recursion between these various interpretations of field, I write.

source



Source. Life force. Aliveness.

Around us, in us, a wellspring of energy to tap into at any moment.

Palpable when we feel our own heartbeat, and when we have our head close to someone's chest and can hear theirs.

A current felt between people, living things, objects, in nature. A vibrational, charged space. We know it when we look into someone's eyes—when our focus on outer appearance blurs and we meet the inner truth of that person, no matter how well we know them.

Maybe it's in the cry of an infant at birth. Maybe it's the last gasp, the "death rattle" we hear when someone passes. It's surely in the wind, waves, flame, and rock.

Sometimes source rages and is loud and all around us, like thunder in a summer heat storm. Sometimes it's a buzzing frenzy of flies. Sometimes it's in dandelion spores floating across an empty city lot or swirling on the surface of a puddle.

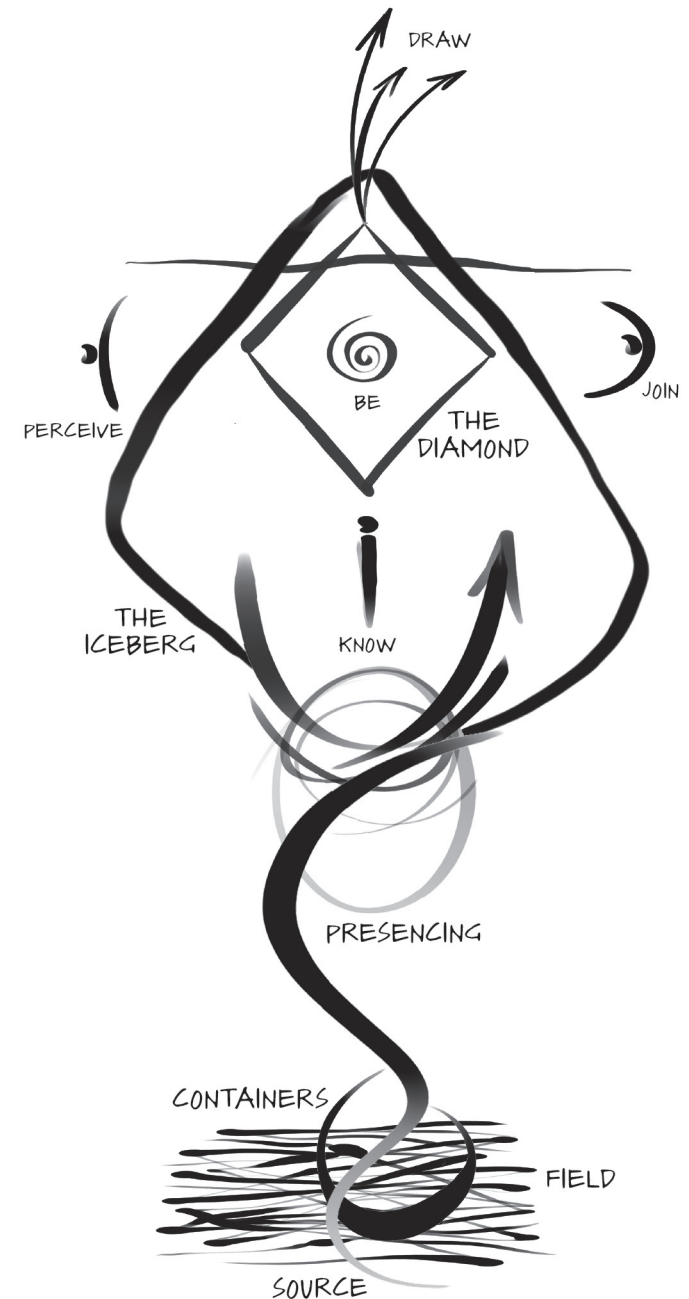
Accessing source while drawing, the mind hangs, suspended, alert and patient for a specific gesture, interior stillness in the midst of outer churning.

I often pause—sometimes for a few minutes even—before drawing. I take a moment to settle, to "Be." People have asked me about this "waiting." It's partly to clear the mind, and yes, partly to sense into source.

Accessing source while drawing, what is meant to be revealed in the present moment becomes perfectly clear.

Source is a self-sustained, inextinguishable resource. We need only to be quiet, open, and breathe in to engage in its current, to infuse our own process of joining.

By attending to source, the essence of what wants to be seen makes itself known, and drawing shifts from a quick repetition of marks made *onto*, to a series of fluid marks extracted *through*. The scribe, pen, surface, words, people, room, moment all exist in harmony.



appendix



Figure 1: *Scribing*. Demonstration of the zone that forms between scribe, speaker, and participant-audience at a session of the World Economic Forum in Nuevo Vallarta, Mexico. Permanent ink on a custom-built wall, 7'h x 40'w, 2012. Photo credit: Alfredo Carlo.

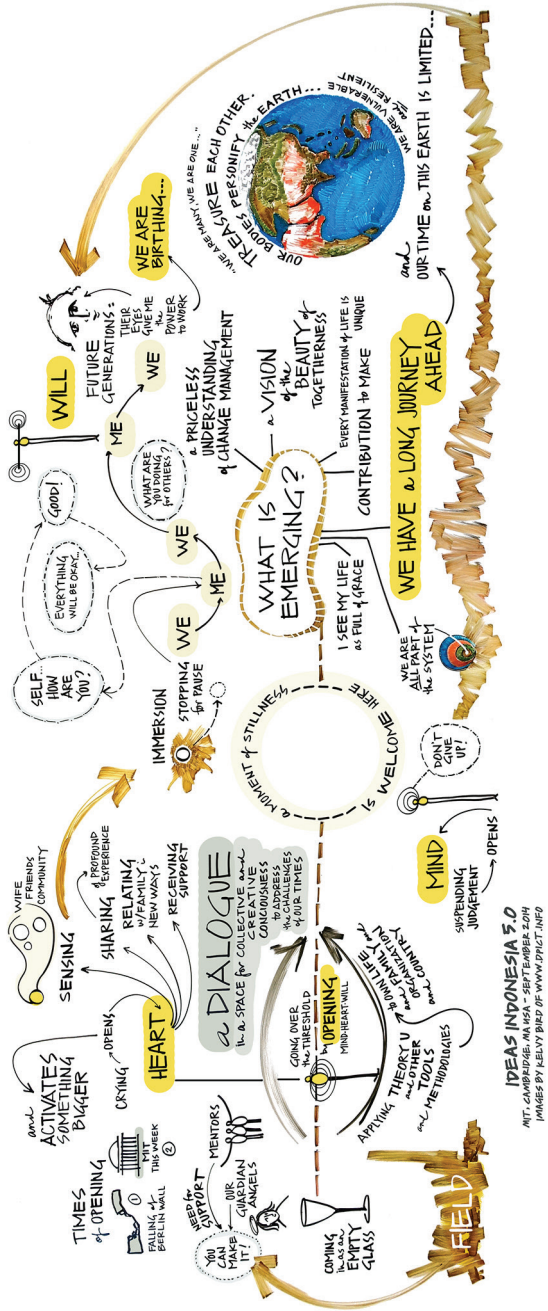


Figure 2: *Integration*. This drawing mapped a two-hour dialogue at the end of a year-long leadership program. It demonstrates the application of system dynamics and balancing voices in the room. Cambridge, MA, USA. Dry-erase ink on whiteboard, 4' h x 12' w, 2014.



Figure 3: *Integration*. Example of flow coming into the room through multiple voices, and weaving individual contributions into one thread. "We have a long journey ahead . . ." "and our time . . ." "we are vulnerable . . ." "treasure each other."

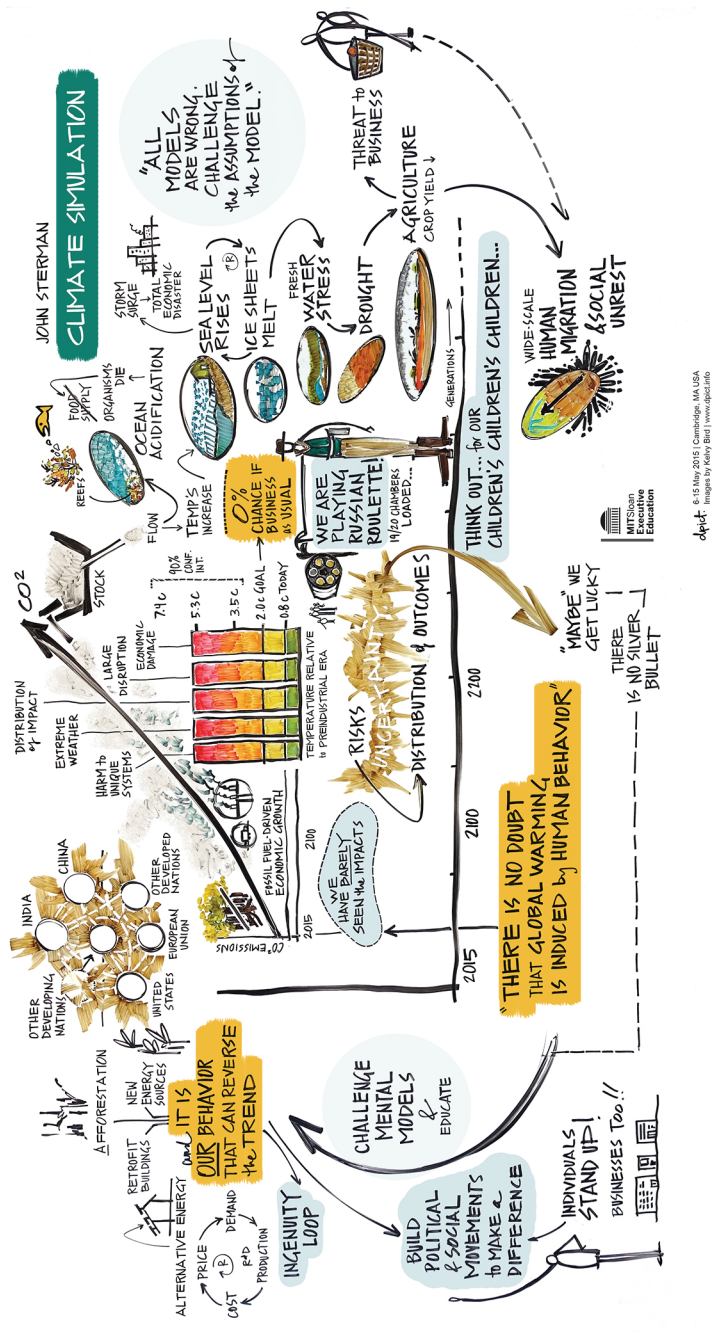


Figure 4: The Iceberg. As applied to scribbling for a C-ROADS Climate Simulation led by John Sterman, director of the MIT System Dynamics Group, Cambridge, MA, USA. Dry-erase ink on whiteboard, 4'h x 8'w, 2015.

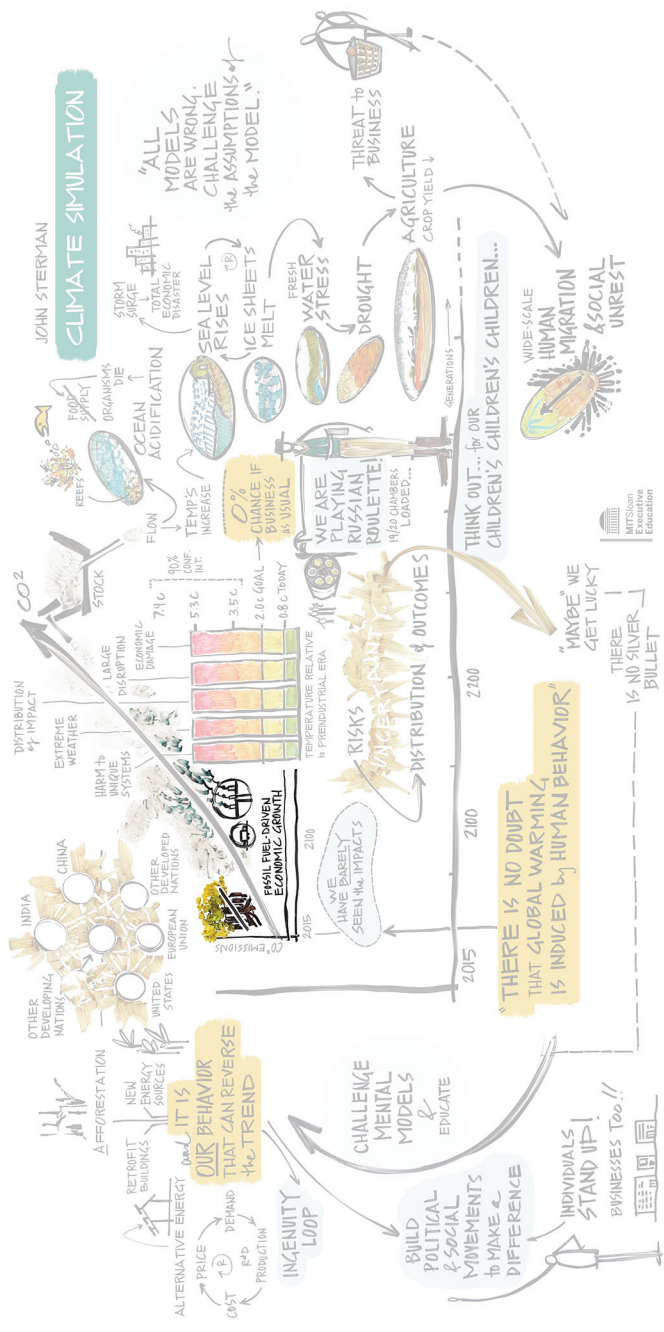


Figure 5: The Iceberg. Structures. Detail from Figure 4. This part of the wall mapped some of the structures that create climate change.

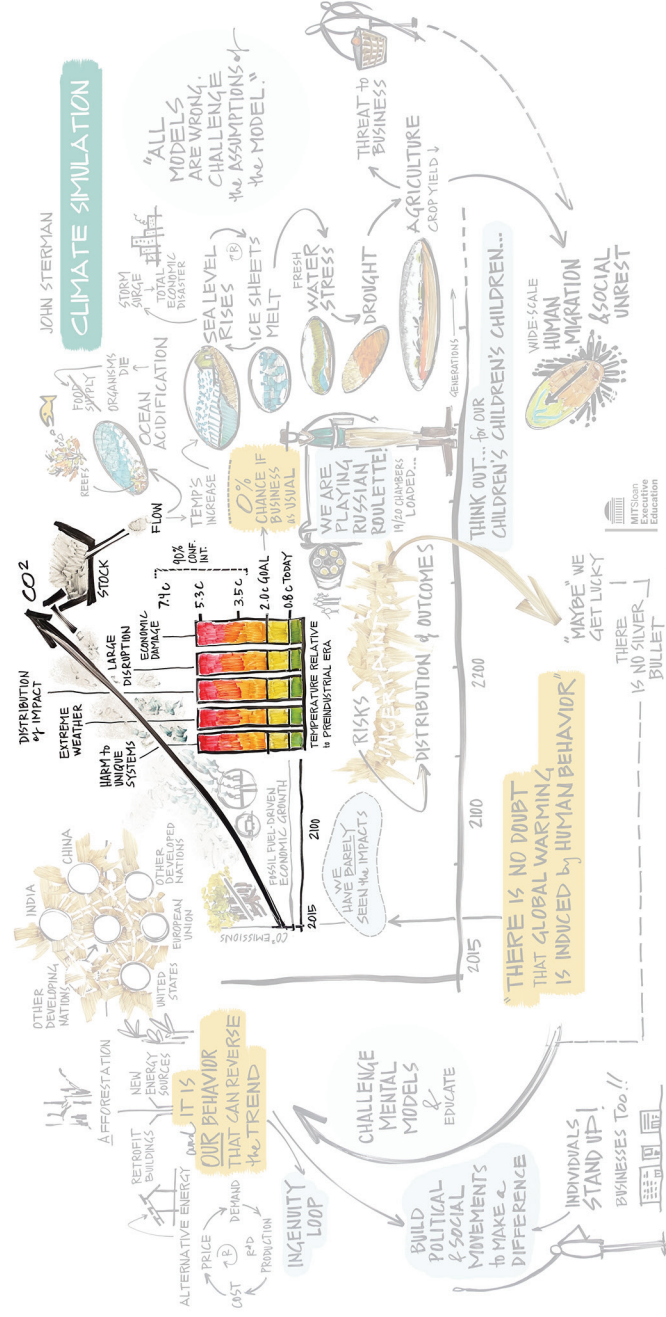


Figure 6: The Iceberg. Patterns of Behavior. Detail from Figure 4. This part of the wall mapped current and projected global warming trends.

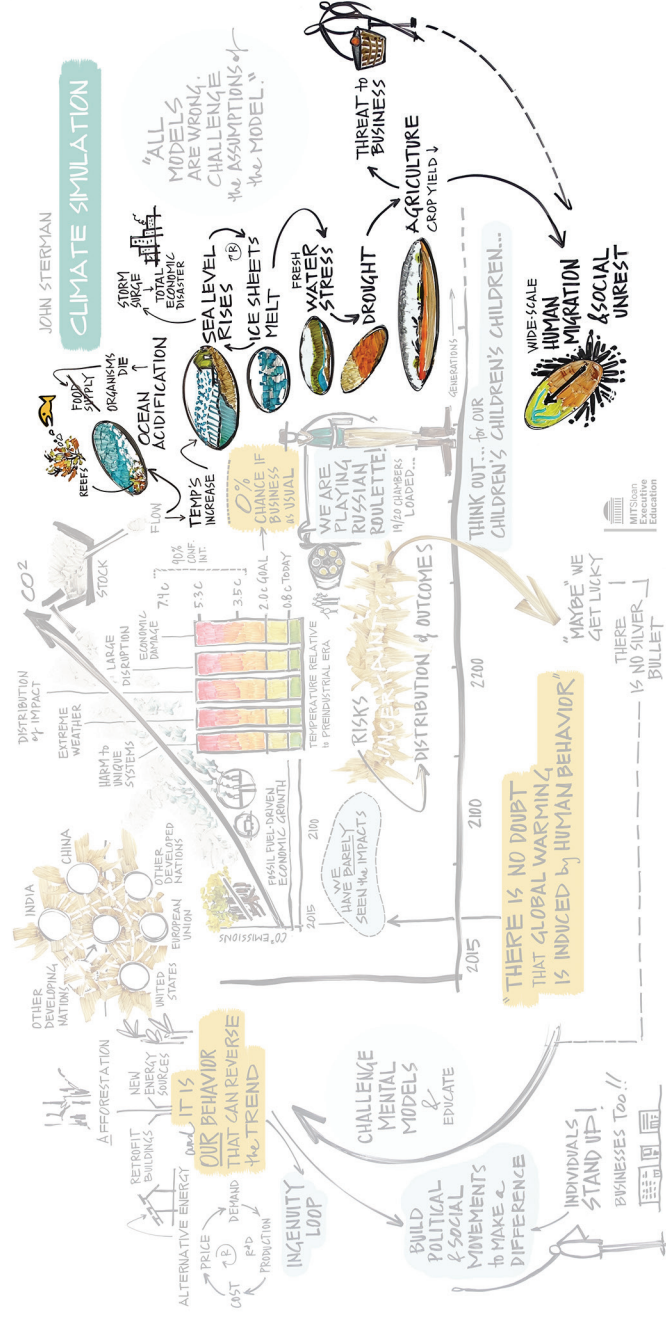
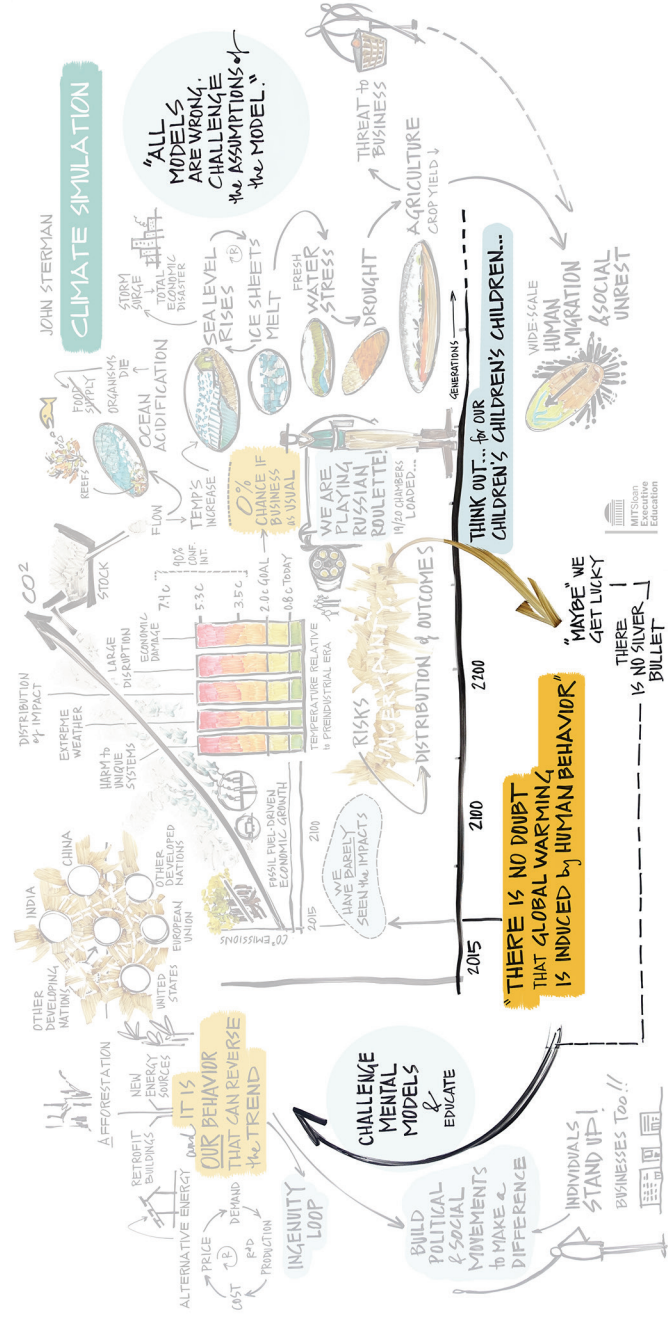
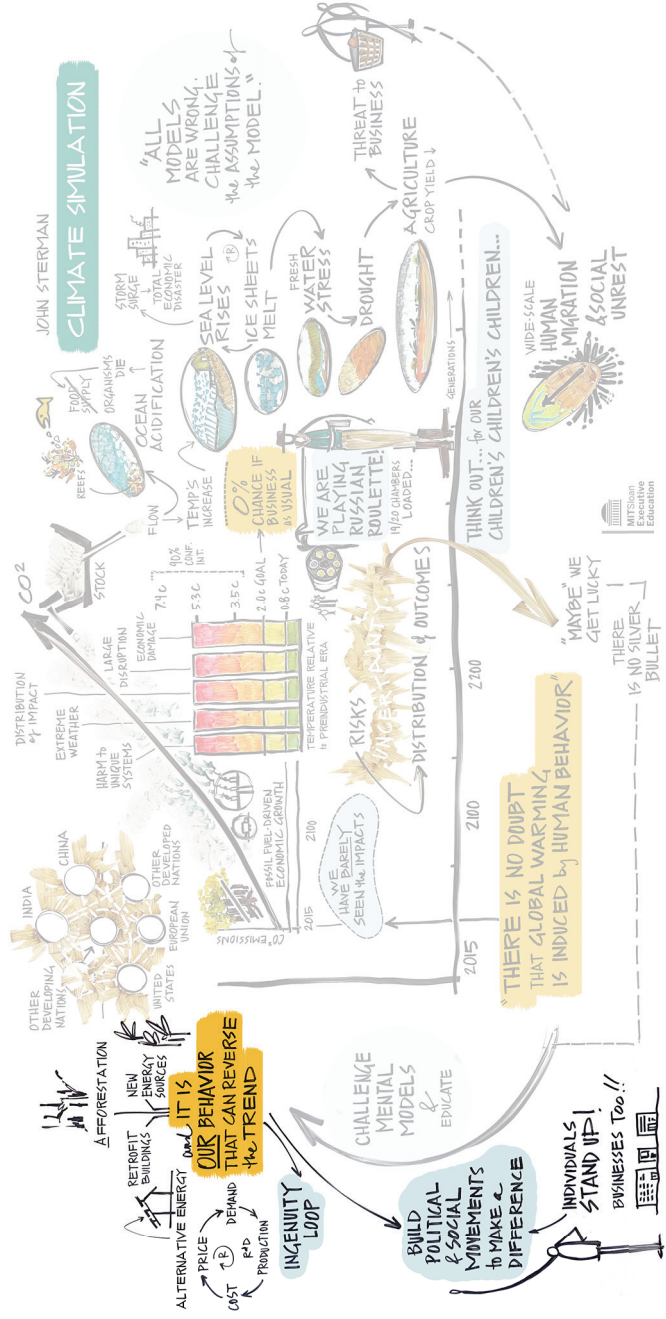


Figure 7: The Iceberg. Events. Detail from Figure 4. This part of the wall mapped current and future scenarios.



6-18 May 2016 | Cambridge, MA USA
 Images by Kelly Bart | www.digitinfo

Figure 8: *The Iceberg. Mental Models.* Detail from Figure 4. This part of the wall mapped how our thinking could change to redirect future outcomes.



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Figure 9: *The Iceberg. Vision.* Detail from Figure 4. This part of the wall envisioned tangible actions that could create a desired future.



Figure 10: *Containers*. A final circle led by Arawana Hayashi during the Presenting Masterclass, with the drawing on the far wall. Berlin, Germany, 2012.



Kelvy Bichter
Presenting Institute - www.presenting.com - PI Master Class, Module 4 - Berlin, Germany 2012

Figure 11: *Presenting*. Detail from the masterclass drawing, where I first became aware of presenting entering the room and the picture simultaneously. Permanent ink on paper, 2012.