

Klára Sedlo: FOGBOW

Welcome to a rather unusual exhibition. The reason you're holding this map in your hands so you don't get lost. It's extremely easy to get lost when venturing into new places. So: stick to the arrows!

Gallery of Art Critics 26. 4. – 14. 5. 2023

You are standing at the beginning of a narrative that started a year and a half ago.

That's when I decided to re-examine my obsessive-compulsive disorder and anxiety. It bothers me that I still don't understand them and that I'll probably never find out what it would be like to live without them. And so I took a journey into the depths of my mind.

Only, I didn't have a map, so I got a little lost. (Oh well!) I got lost alone in my head while I searched for my demons.

When I started to find myself again and understand the confusion within me (coincidentally, it happened in London), a story suddenly popped into my mind.

As you may know, sometimes I think of short stories out of the blue. Except, this story offered a resolution to my problem.

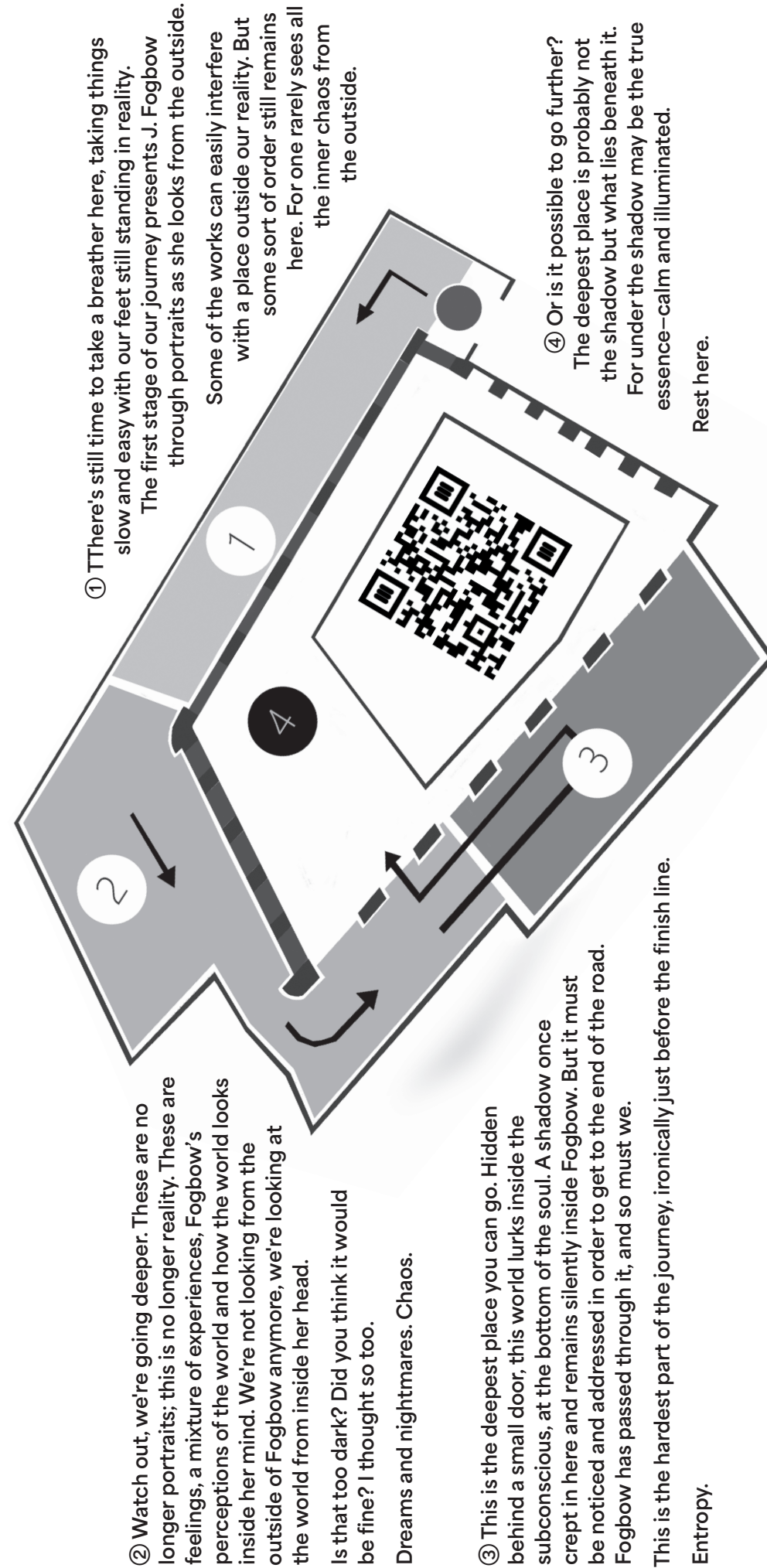
It was the story of a strange fortune teller who shared many character traits with me, but she had no anxiety at the end. It was me, but without any neuroses. Fascinating! It was the answer to my question!

I sat on the bed and watched the psychic and her journey—it unfolded in my mind like a ball of wool thrown from the table to the floor. The path led through a battle with inner demons to finding inner peace. That night in the hotel room near the Barbican, I was excitedly writing down short stories of her life and fragmentary records of her thoughts, while London rustled outside.

And I did the same thing many nights afterwards in different cities. I became intimate with her and watching her stories helped me understand myself.

And so Jessica Fogbow was born, a London-born psychic. My alter ego, which finally answers the question of what it might have been like if I hadn't had anxiety my whole life. This exhibition presents the results of my observations of Fogbow, charting her personality, life, thoughts and journey to her soul—and in doing so, it maps me. And who knows, maybe Fogbow can help you find answers as well.

This exhibition is dedicated to her, for her 30th birthday.



Fogbow, the psychic, lived in the heart of London. She did all sorts of things for a living—fortune telling, reading dreams, teaching how to wake up from nightmares, exorcising ghosts... just about anything you could think of that a psychic could do.

She enjoyed exploring astral plains and helping others. But the part of her job where she had to explain things that are better seen with your own eyes and can't be fully described in words, that part of her job she found strangely sad. How she would have loved to show those things instead of saying so many words.

"I would never say that," Constantine said. They sat side by side on the floor by the fireplace. An intersection of two worlds that could be unnerving to a casual observer.

"I know. It's strange, don't you think. I've ended up with no one in the world who understands me, except you..."

"Because I can look behind you and in front of you. And because I care about you."

"You're strangely calm and wise when you answer. Sometimes it scares me."

"These are things you learn with death," he said.

Fogbow sipped her cocoa, the other mug standing in front of him. He couldn't drink or touch anything, but he was still glad that Fogbow always made tea, coffee, cocoa, or food for him.

Jake wondered how it was possible that she didn't know about him. She was a psychic. She must have known everything. Everything everything everything in the world. Then how could she not know I am watching her? He asked himself. He listened in on her conversations from the apartment next door for hours and watched her footsteps from the window for a good three years... Why was he doing this? Why, Jake?

"Oh... no, I know what you're thinking, and I don't want you to think that. I'm not a stalker, nor was I crazy in love with her. It was more of an obsession. An obsession with her person, her secret, who the hell she is. An undercover billionaire? An actress? A crazy person? An alcoholic? There were a thousand possibilities. Her story would make great social media content and a YouTube channel. I could make a fortune. But I guess I'd never have the courage to post it—what if she found out. The longer I followed her, the more fascinated I became, the more fearful I became."

That's the difference between seers and witches. Seers see the grid but they don't necessarily influence it, whereas witches can influence it, without necessarily seeing it.

"Sometimes I feel that the sadder events happen, the more fear is present in children's rooms, behind their windows, and the more shadows we cultivate within ourselves. Maybe it doesn't always apply, and maybe it only happens to some... But it certainly can happen." Fogbow mused aloud.

Jake, an IT guy and a YouTuber who recently turned thirty-five has only been to Fogbow once. He had his cards read. But he was a die-hard skeptic and did it more out of curiosity. And so that he could later make a vlog about it... But since then, he'd been endlessly fascinated by Fogbow because her prophecy came true. He was obsessed with finding out who she was. At first, he'd watch her occasionally from the café across the street from her apartment, but then he'd sit there every day, and then he'd wait for her every morning. Finally, after a few months, he moved into the apartment next door to listen to what she was saying through the wall. It was a real obsession.

Jake heard a couch squeak behind the wall in Fogbow's apartment. "This has to have a deeper meaning; it has to..." she said. "It has to..." There was silence for a moment. "I mean it..." she replied to that half-minute of silence. "It has to make sense." Silence.

"Look, we're part of a puzzle, and the puzzle is huuuuge. If you put the whole thing together, God will be the answer, but you're the one who has to figure it out—where your puzzle goes, not..."

Again there was silence. "Come on!" She threw up her hands. "It really bugs me how you let me figure things out on my own. Why can't you just tell me?" Silence.

Her face brightened. "You're stupid," she laughed. "Do you want some tea? Hm? Okay." Either that person wasn't there, or it was a ghost... So how the hell is it going to drink tea? Jake thought. He could hear Fogbow boil the water and then probably pour two cups. There must have been a tea strainer hanging in both of them, probably that old one in the shape of a cat's head that he'd seen there last time. When the tea was ready, she brought it to the coffee table—both cups, he heard them tap against the wooden top.

The couch creaked again.

The last few minutes of the conversation didn't make any sense to him without the other party's answers. He carefully listened to bits and pieces of sentences, taking notes. And he imagined Fogbow drinking warm tea while the other mug next to her grew cold.

But the truth is, it occurred to him that Fogbow had never said she lived alone.

Constantine was a ghost. And he was the best thing that could have happened to Fogbow. Their encounter seemed bizarrely random to her, even though she knew nothing was ever random. Few things really happened by chance. They'd become friends during his exorcism—Fogbow was supposed to have swept him out of somewhere then. But instead, his initially arrogant soul had, in a few minutes, revealed to be very friendly. They spent the whole night together in an interesting conversation that continued into the next day and the next.

Only with time did she understand that such encounters are not always destiny but intentions. She couldn't always see them in advance, especially when they weren't tied to a living person but to spirits or beings and energies from other dimensions. That's when she couldn't sense the intentions at all. And that's why no seer can see everything. Nor, by definition, he can't.

Imagine our world as two-dimensional. We are only figures, lacking depth, running around two-dimensionally in a two-dimensional world. Like in Ládinek's travels to space or the Discworld book. We cannot see that a third dimension exists and that surfaces intersecting our universe perpendicularly can create walls and barriers or change the course of things. That is something unnatural to us. And seers are those who perceive that other dimension. Not with the ordinary senses (because, as two-dimensioners, we're not physically equipped to perceive the third dimension) but with something else. Something called the third eye. In a two-dimensional flat world, it might be more of a second eye.

Seers with a second eye can sometimes be wrong because they rely on their gut feeling. They sense subtle vibrations when a perpendicular three-dimensional wall approaches a two-dimensional surface. They perceive its length, its thickness, and even if it only creates a line on a two-dimensional surface, the seer with the other eye will perceive its massiveness and its overlap.

That's how seers work. In our world they have two eyes and a third eye, but what they perceive is the same. They sense a grid and surfaces that intersect our world, and the moment they cross or approach it, they feel them most strongly.

That's why Fogbow couldn't read the grid just anywhere but only when she got a clue from a living three-dimensional person or situation. Then she could see what was coming through the grid, what event would cross our reality, and even where the connections from this or that person lead. She couldn't just look around the grid and see what that energetic being standing two squares away is doing and what its intent is. That's not how it worked.

That is why she couldn't see Constantine walking into her life. He was standing away from her, even beyond our three-dimensional world. She liked pleasant surprises because only a few things could surprise her.

A man and his dog are talking on the street; the world is much crazier than it used to be. The dog was talking and the man was nodding.



The question is what to fill the void with. Who am I if not a shell of my anxieties and fears? I thought that when you peeled it off, the soul would remain pretty solid and clearly shaped—like peeling a boiled egg.

But no, the shell of my soul was the shell of a half-raw egg—and so, as I peeled it off, it melted my soul into an unpleasantly semi-liquid form, and now I'm wondering how to give it shape.

How to shape it (and with what?) into something worthwhile... When I've never known a pot of hot water.

She entered the convenience store. Small, out-of-the-way shops open until midnight with one man or woman behind the counter were common in this part of the world. She picked a biscuit—a perhaps overly sweet wheat wafer covered with cocoa butter chocolate substitute. She paid the young woman behind the counter.

“What should we do next?” He whispered in her ear.

But she couldn't answer him out loud in front of people. What would they think if she spoke to an invisible spirit next to her?

Let's go and sit by the river, she thought, and thanked the shopkeeper aloud. And we'll try to find the meaning of all this," she finished her sentence as they left the shop.

“Who would want to reincarnate an ant with its leg glued to cardboard?”

“I also dreamt I met Vince, but he was actually a snake. I didn't think it was weird at all.” She continued talking. “Dreams tend to be like that.” Constantine nodded. “Some have meanings, and some are mostly chaotic. Which do you think this was?”

“I'm probably going to sound like some Gandalf, but: shadows grow,” she explained to a client, tapping her finger on the Tower card. “It's an inner fear, fed by every humiliation, wound, and hatred. Fed by hate, it feeds hate. Fed by shadows, it grows into shadows. And once it gets too big, it's hard to tame. Like a big, ill-bred dog jumping back and forth on a chain made from a human soul. Barking at the people around him. It can either be trained, at least a little, or kept on an even shorter chain.

Or let go, and that's probably the worst option.”

“Didn't you know a witch? She'd come back again and again. Even if she loses her body. Just like angels,” Fogbow laughed. “Except, we can choose—unfortunately—to spread either light or darkness. Some don't choose wisely, and most importantly—you can never decide only for one in your life.”

Besides, she always thought one should never wish for superpowers. Instead, one should wish to be prepared for them.

“How many? I changed so many apartments. So many times I've thrown my soul between four walls, and each time differently.” She poured tea into bizarre-looking mugs. “And since you asked about the truth... chm. There is only reality—the way things are. Truth or falsehood is only a means of how it appears.”

She paused and looked out the window.

“See the lights? The city is full of them. They're like little bugs, some just standing still and others swarming in groups. Entropy. I love the sight. If anything in the world has meaning, it's the feeling of happiness and warmth here inside.”

She felt the middle of her unbuttoned jacket against her chest.

“I love the energy. I could soak it up forever. When I figured out I could twist space, I was quite young. I had help from someone who could spark that feeling of warmth in me every time. He was dead at the time already and he's still my best friend. When I look out at the city, I see him. He was exactly like that. You can't describe it, but when you feel it, when you see it, it seems like you can touch it. It's like my friend is surrounding me with his energy again. That's what it's like when I look out the window at London at night, even when I look up at the stars... And then I wonder what the meaning is here on Earth. It must have some meaning if I've been here so long.”

“Drugs drugs drugs!” her face turned sour, “Getting there through a drug detour is really dangerous!”

“Come on, I can't work on this for years like a dick... I'll just try and either make it or not.”

There was silence for a while. Finally, Fogbow, struck by her naivety, took her time to reply.

Fogbow waved her hand again.

“You're thinking too... how should I put this... linear. Linear in time.

This... all of this... how to explain?

Okay. See that kettle with water over there? A priest once told me an interesting thing. He asked:

“Why does water boil in a kettle?”

I said it's because fire or electricity heats it up and brings the water to boil. Clear as day, right?

“Or, the priest smiled,

‘because wanted some tea.’

Both answers are possible.

Both are true.”

“A fire in a fireplace never knows whether it will burn three or two logs. It requires a higher intervention—for example, your hand. You are the creator of their flame for both the fire and the logs.” Constantine said.

Though interacting with existence, might be of the essence, that relative desire to search for life, compared to a garden and fence, I always wonder what I'll catch beyond.

Fogbow could speak several languages but when she concentrated heavily at her desk, with her mind hanging about several spiritual levels up, she understood everyone, regardless of language. For she did not communicate with people in words but with images formed by their minds as they spoke. The whole world was one huge colorful puzzle to her.

She remembered a funny incident. She was walking past Finsbury Circus at night when she was stopped by a man asking for money. In between his pleas, he artfully (with a rather distinct Liverpool accent) weaved in a made-up story about how he'd missed his train and lost his Oyster card... he made up anything he could think of. Including that he had a wife and kids waiting for him at home. A heart would have stopped.

But it was midnight from April 30th to May 1st, and Fogbow didn't even have to try to tell his fortune, nor did she need the cards. She saw everything.

“You don't have children,” Fogbow replied. “You only have nephews and nieces, your brother George's kids. And you also have a hundred pounds in your pocket.”

It was all true. She could read it in another dimension, in the grid that hung over and around him. She saw that this was how they were meant to meet.

The man stood with his mouth open. She smiled, letting the man stare at her, baffled, and walked on. This encounter had gone as planned, and she didn't mind at all. She hadn't the slightest desire to change it.

Fogbow lives alone. She doesn't have friends or family.

But since she can see the other shore, she talks to the spirits of the people that she meets on the streets of London. Her best friend is a spirit—he can't be seen, yet they can hear each other. Or is she talking to herself?

I think that all the feelings Fogbow went through, that I made her go through, are also mine. I put her through the darkest night and the brightest morning that London has ever seen. I made her lose friends and left her alone so that I could better observe what was happening inside her.

“I knew it would happen,” she looked towards the phone. “I know,” he said. “I could feel it coming too. Such events can be sensed far in advance. The plain of ideas vibrates differently when it approaches, especially around the people involved.” “But why did she do it?” He just looked at her. “I know. It's where the wind goes, the cloak goes,” she said.

“You knew before you could feel it. You would be good at reading people, even if you couldn't tell fortunes.” “I think...” She gazed at the fire for a moment. She paused. “I don't think one can live with this. You can't live with one foot in one world and one foot in the other... You see so many strange things... and so few people understand you.” She flinched as he laughed. “But that's how you live,” he said. “You don't seem to mind that much.”

“Don't be sarcastic, you know how empty it is sometimes. I could inhale this whole town and I still wouldn't feel full. I'd still be gasping for more. And the further I get in your world, the less joy I get from physical pleasures. They don't bring any pleasure. And the more empty I am...” “But it's not why you think. The feeling of emptiness comes not from the fact that you are on the borderline but from the fact that it scares you.”