

# Twonism II



# **Twonism II**

*(Thoughts, Essays, and Poems on Life and Art)*

*September 1, 2016 – March 9, 2024*

By: Damon Freed

Damon Freed  
1100 West 4th Street  
Sedalia MO, 65301, USA  
damonfreed@gmail.com  
www.damonfreed.com

Editor: Damon Freed

Designer: Damon Freed

Production by Damon Freed

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## **Freedom, What's it Worth to You? (The Distance Between)**

Freedom is the sound of noise, silence is the sound of obedience, and our culture is enslaved. Freedom is Aphex Twin's, "Girl/Boy" playing beautifully followed next by Waxahatchee's, "Right Back to It." The distance between. Obedience is standing in front of the most undisturbed Mark Rothko you've ever seen. Or, one of my own paintings, quiet as can be! Generational nuances of change between them! All of this is happening, out of control, with little understanding of universal intrinsic value at the same time across distances and we are strengthened by these experiences, yet suffer from them, the same.

—**Damon Freed**, March 9, 2024 at 3:13 PM

## The Alchemy of Painting

The control of light. Colored flat surfaces. Some irregular surfaces, as well can be manipulated to larger extent be it with less control of light by way of exactitude!

There are parallels to atmospheric effects of light in natural outdoor settings to those indoor wherein artificial light namely electric lights are utilized to illuminate the physical planes of paintings!

This parallel effect occurs through light to dark adjustments of value wherein spatial depths are activated in the eyes and brain and body!

Also – through color proximities of color scales and gradient effects, nature’s vapors such as water molecules in fog-states or dust molecules in windstorms, are parallel in factual ways. The dispersion of these molecules in nature, their concentration, has immediate effects on us. So too does the dispersion of molecules onto a canvas by way of concentration of paint!

The metaphysical is reached in states in between. When the mind wanders from fact to fact within states of unknowing. This is a reality within the mind. Mystery.

Directives come to us from within metaphysical mindsets from spaces unknown to us. We call these inspirations. I have a feeling our directives reach us from external sources. Through light, or the lack thereof.

These directives are what lead to my next experiment with facts and fictions, what I like to call truths. This is the Spiritual to me. We call the directives inspirations and the paintings are material facts composed and intertwined with inspirations while working. These changes that occur during the painting’s process are recorded into the history of each individual work of art! Therefore, paintings are facts and inspirations intertwined, a balancing of physical and metaphysical realms. Light is thought and thought is light. All thought exists within light, some older and some newer. Some futures beyond our comprehension. Even our own. But to others, your precise future may be. As Leonard Cohen said, “No one to follow and nothing to teach, except that the goal falls short of the reach.” Be strong and you (time) will carry on beyond anyone’s knowing, even your own!

—Damon Freed

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# **Introduction –**

**Entropy and Value:**  
**A Martian's Introduction to Art**  
by  
**Dan Marshall (Philosopher)**

There are a few simple cliches I use to describe philosophy to people who are not philosophers. One is that philosophy attempts to describe the world to a completely ignorant intelligence, such as a Martian or an Artificial Intelligence. A three-year-old human might work as well, so long as that child understands words like 'salient' and 'supervenience.' (Martians and AIs would presumably come to understand these terms in the process of us teaching them English, even though many philosophers, occasionally including myself, can also sometimes be a bit hazy about just what those two terms mean.)

It is relatively easy to not only explain our beliefs about the world (such as why the sky is blue) to such an innocent intelligence, but also to explain why we think these beliefs are correct. Another way of describing philosophy is to say that it is the art of asking questions, a description that it shares with science and mathematics. Science investigates how the world is and the causal structures that control how it changes. Mathematics provides mathematicians with an abstract space that they can play their arcane games in, often with no view towards real-world applications. But mathematics also, almost as a side-effect, provides us with symbolic and logical frameworks that can be used to model reality, providing science with various languages that it can express its discoveries, observations, and theories in.

These disciplines tell us how the world is, and how we can change it. But they are powerless to tell us how the world *should* be or what we should desire and value. Answering those questions is left to the philosophers – and to the artists, authors, and poets, who use a different set of tools than we do.

I have heard a mathematician say that the natural state of a mathematician is the state of confusion, and it is the job of a mathematician to become progressively less confused. Once a mathematician has eliminated her confusion with a cunning proof of why a given mathematical statement is definitively right or definitively wrong, she can then move on to find something else to be confused about. Much the same is true in philosophy. Of late, I have become very confused

about morality, ethics, and politics, to the extent that I have slowly been writing a Big Book of Morality in order to better express my confusion.

So I reacted with a great deal of trepidation when Damon asked if I would be willing to write an introduction to his book on art and related topics. While I do enjoy looking at art and hanging around artists, I am afraid that I am even more confused about art and beauty than I am about morality. But, since I was unable to dodge hard enough to convince Damon to find somebody else, I agreed to see what I could do.

As it happened, this task was even more difficult than I had first thought. Some famous author (possibly Neil Gaiman) said that introducing a book should be like introducing one person you know at a party to another person you know, in the hopes that they will become good friends. “Judy, this is Jane, she’s into diving, both sky and scuba – though never on the same day. Jane, this is Judy, she writes poetry that flashes like fireworks.” But providing such an introduction requires grasping that person’s or that book’s essential nature, some central unity that is a reflection of who they are. As I read Damon’s book, I can dimly sense some unities that do tie his book together into a coherent whole. But those unities are only visible outside the narrow bandwidths that my own discipline limits itself to. I hope, dear reader, that you are more perceptive than I am, and I encourage you to discover those unities for yourself.

Discouraged, I instead embarked on writing a kind of commentary track for Damon’s book, writing a reply to each short essay or poem. That process was more work, but also easier, in much the same way that moving a truckload of gravel a shovelful at a time can be easier than writing a sonnet. Fortunately, Damon decided that one of my response pieces – an extraordinarily lengthy one – would work quite well as an introduction to his book as a whole. I do not know if this piece captures the essential nature of Damon’s work or thoughts. But I do agree that this piece does provide a perspective into the creative process, a process that both me and Damon are very concerned about. I hope that Damon is correct, and that it will serve as a worthwhile introduction to his work, but I nurse my own private doubts (as any creator will, I presume). I will leave it to you, the audience, dear reader, to be the final judge of whether it is our hopes or our doubts that are the true reflection of reality – as, I suppose, any artist must, in the end.

This piece was written in response to Damon’s “On Malevich’s Tendency Toward Nature,” which, in turn, was written in response to a quote from Kazimir Malevich’s *The Non-Objective*

*World: The Manifesto of Suprematism* (1959, originally published in 1915). In this quote, Malevich states “The human being observes in nature the unconscious, ‘disorderly’ activity of the elements and seeks to arrange this in conformity with the ‘lawfulness’ of his consciousness.”

Damon disagrees with Malevich, saying:

In the above quotation there is morality. Malevich seems to understand it as the orderly conduct of artists while composing. And our results reveal this conscious conduct. And at times it is expressed in a subconscious manner at which time our base consciousness is revealed. Composition, shape, and color organization are the three main forces of morality in my nonobjective and representational works. But, in this quote Malevich is disregarding nature’s other beings as not having their own consciousness and ways of organizational thinking, the difference is obvious, and his statement lacks humility. Of course, as I have stated in other notes, this I believe to be false, as we know it to be false. We are a part of nature and not outside of it but within it. Therefore, while we might manicure and organize the Earth, we are not the only ones and Nature certainly has a way of fighting back to tell us, when enough is enough!

It is the job of philosophers to disagree with other philosophers, and if two philosophers ever agreed completely on a given point, I’m fairly sure a rift would open up in the space-time continuum. So it was with some relief that I was able to disagree with Damon in turn, especially since my disagreement meant I could avoid talking about those pesky *values*, and instead talk only about scientific beliefs. I don’t think Malevich is talking about morality, so much as scientific objective fact.

Let’s start with information theory.

Information theory is to meaning as economics is to value. Many people say that economists know the price of everything and the value of nothing. Despite this, a knowledge of economics is useful to an ethicist, since it provides a clarifying perspective on value. Economics abstracts away the notion of ‘morally good’ from its notion of ‘value’ by closely examining how completely rational, amoral, and egoistic beings would react in response to the things they desire. While studying the mathematics of code-breaking during World War II, Claude Shannon made a similar revolutionary move by abstracting the notion of ‘meaning’ away from his notion of ‘information,’ and defining information purely in terms of entropy.

Entropy is generally said to be ‘disorder.’ The Second Law of Thermodynamics says that entropy in a closed system will always increase over time. To the best of my knowledge, that is

the only law of physics that isn't time-reversible. In fact, increases in entropy are how we measure time in the first place, since the clock on the wall relies on increases in entropy in order to function, to tick in one way and not the other.

Physicists wax poetic about the fact that life can actually turn back time in a sense, by reducing entropy and making itself and its immediate environment more "orderly" over time. For example, astronomers used the *Voyager* spacecraft to look back at our Pale Blue Dot, Earth. From the outer edges of our solar system, they were able to measure detectable amounts of free oxygen and methane in Earth's atmosphere. Both of those gases are highly reactive and should have burned each other out of our atmosphere long ago. Their presence shows that our atmosphere is quite a way from being in chemical equilibrium; that it's in a suspiciously low entropy state. This is a sign that Earth harbors life, a sign that alien astronomers might also discover.

Life can do this because our biosphere is *not* a closed system. Thanks to photosynthesis (which produces both free oxygen gas and the sugars that eventually decompose into methane), our biosphere absorbs low-entropy visible-light photons from our glowingly-hot Sun, and radiates high-entropy infrared photons (heat) out into the cold darkness of interstellar space. Life reduces its own entropy by increasing entropy elsewhere in the System of the World.

But while entropy is our enemy in physics and biology, it's our friend in information theory. The amount of information a 'text' – some possibly meaningful string or array of symbols, such as a painting, for example – contains is equal to its entropy.

There is a trade off between efficiency (the most information per symbol) and redundancy (being able to reconstruct the 'text' when some of it has been obliterated by noise). Spanish has a smaller vocabulary than the word-thief that is English, so Spanish transmits fewer bits of information per syllable than English does. But to make up for this, fluent Spanish speakers speak much faster than fluent English speakers, so about the same number of bits of information will be transmitted over the same unit of *time*. All natural spoken languages have about the same bit-rate over time, homing in on that optimal trade-off between efficiency and redundancy.

I have seen old folks complain about "kids these days" and their "leet-speak." Lol rotfl brb icymi etc. But the fault isn't in the kids, but in the medium. It takes more effort to type a character with your thumbs on your phone than it does to type one on a physical computer keyboard, and much more effort than saying a syllable out loud. So texting puts a greater premium on efficiency

and less of a value on redundancy. The exact same compression of language happened almost 200 years ago, when the telegraph was the newest communication technology around – and you also saw old folks back then complaining about the “kids these days” and their compacted cabalistic messages and codes that the kids – now long dead from old age – sent down the wires.

A text that is maximally informative, that carries the most information per symbol, is one that is maximally entropic. It’s going to be one that looks like somebody bashed their fingers on the keyboard with complete and perfect randomness. It looks like static interference, like line noise.

That’s because noise isn’t the absence of information. It’s the presence of information that we are not interested in, that lacks meaning for us. When you were watching a TV show back in the 1990s, you weren’t interested in whether or not a quasar on the other side of the universe farted billions of years ago (its radiations sometimes detectable as a gray sparkle on the analog TVs of the day, but no longer visible on TVs and monitors in our more digital times). You were busy watching *The X-Files*, hoping that Fox and Scully would finally kiss. On the other hand, the radio astronomer listening to the sky was *very* interested in whether that quasar farted or not... but was really not wanting to know that you made yourself some microwave popcorn during a commercial break, blotting out some of her observations.

The kind of information – the kind of ‘texts’ – humans prefer tend to be fairly redundant and orderly. We tend to reduce the entropy around us, using metabolic energy that increases the entropy of the larger universe as we do so.

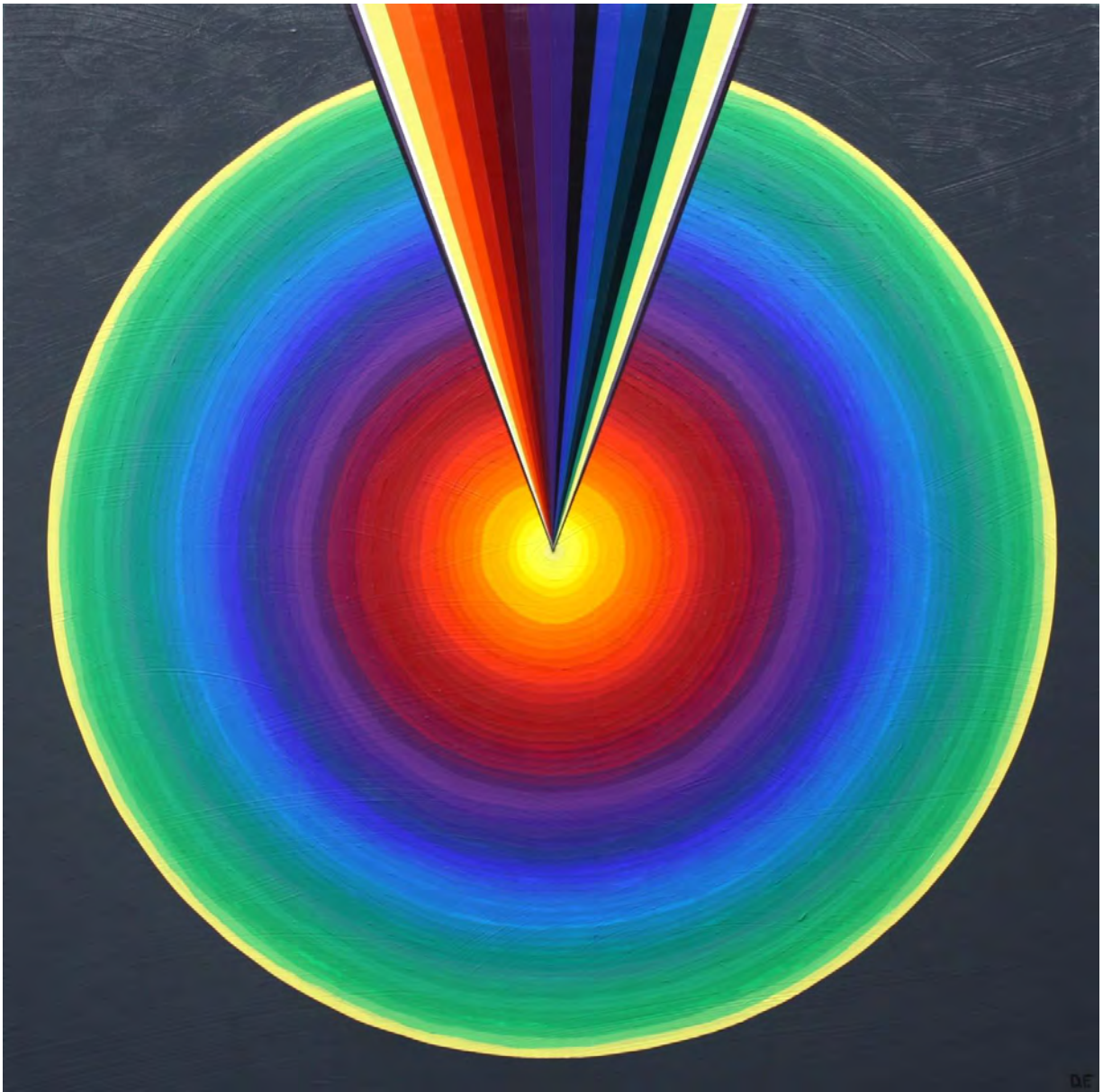
Take the game of solitaire, for example. By shuffling a deck of cards, you are essentially generating an extremely large number. If you have shuffled properly – and, for an assignment in a graduate-level logic course, I once worked out that you would need to shuffle four times to do this – you will have generated one of  $52!$  – 52 factorial, about  $8.07 \times 10^{67}$ , or about the number of atoms of hydrogen that would be found in 67 billion stars the mass of our Sun, a goodly chunk of our entire Milky Way Galaxy – possible permutations of 52 cards. Laying out a hand of solitaire preserves that information, that insanely large number. In the process of solving the hand, you progressively reduce this huge supply of information down to orderly, low-information, patterns. Victory brings that number down to  $4!$  (24, in everyday numbers) possible permutations. And that

little chunk of information that is left is not terribly interesting, nothing more than the precise order of suites that the four remaining stacks are in.

Perception is also a process that has negative entropy. About a third of our brain is dedicated to visual processing. A lot of that processing involves making a model of the world around us. The parts of our brains that are closest to the information coming in from the eyes compares that information to what our model is expecting, and only what is surprising and off-model gets reported further up the chain. I asked Damon if he had a piece in his *oeuvre* that makes use of illusions in order to show this kind of perceptual lossy compression at work, and he suggested this:

### **For Allowing Dreams to Come Forth**

In perception, “For Allowing Dreams to Come Forth, I have discovered a new color phenomenon. When studying the painting’s center dot in duration the entire circumference of its circular pattern becomes neutralized. The colored spectrum, through keen awareness and optical mixing (when two or more separated colors become blended at a greater distance from the paintings) the painting’s center remains fixed and destabilized simultaneously. Also, its colors are extinguished by the eyes. Which is a new form of simultaneous contrast I’m coining radial extinguishing colors!



*For Allowing Dreams to Come Forth*, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 46 x 46 inches

According to Damon, the process of painting starts with a perception or inspiration. Translating that initial perception or inspiration to the canvas likely has negative entropy too, though the noise of putting brush to canvas likely injects some tasty information back into the final product. Still, how much information is there on the canvas, once the paint is dry?

Painting is a three-dimensional medium, and an analog one, so if you take a digital photograph of a painting and turn it into a print, you'll be losing a lot of information about the



brush-strokes. Even I, as artistically illiterate as I am, can experience the difference between looking at a print and looking at the original painting. 3D printing would retain more information, but would still lose some, since that's still a digital technology. The process of printing a replica painting would be made even more difficult by the fact that some paintings have translucent layers of varnish which subtly shade the opaque paint beneath. (A fact I learned from a documentary about the Mona Lisa.) But with the right printing technology and with a high enough resolution, we could, in principle, create a replica that even the most eagle-eyed and discerning human would not be able to tell from the original from, say, a foot away.

Once we have a digital file, we can compress it. Some compression processes, like a human perceiving nature or a computer ripping a CD's worth of music into mp3s, are lossy. These processes eliminate bits of information that are not important, such as any delicate notes that happen the first few milliseconds after a loud drumbeat. Scientists have determined that not even the snobbiest of audiophiles could possibly hear those sounds, despite the insistence of the audiophiles that they can.

But other compression processes are lossless, and work by determining what pieces of information in a work are 'expected' and can be reduced to some brief notations, and which are 'surprising' and need to be described in greater detail. For example, does your painting have a lot of blank canvas, or a lot of flat black areas? Then we could just replace that information with a fairly small number or string of symbols that indicate which pixels or voxels are blank or black. If we want to replicate the canvas itself, a bit of knowledge about how it was woven might come in handy.

In order to figure out what kinds of information are 'expected' and what kinds are 'surprising' for a given genre of texts, documents, files, etc., we need to look at a standard corpus of work that represents that genre. For compressing documents written in English, Shakespeare is the standard corpus used to figure out character and  $n$ -gram frequencies. For images, the standard test image that compression algorithms are optimized for is the centerfold of the November 1972 issue of Playboy magazine, featuring Lena Forsén – a bit of male gaze incorporated into the technological world that surrounds us.

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. How true is this? On Wikipedia, there is a 512x512 pixel image of Lena, which focuses on just her face. This image, compressed into the PNG format, clocks in at 463 kilobytes. In order to prove a point, an earlier version of myself

copy-and-pasted a thousand words of a previous draft of this introduction into a raw text file, discarding the bloated markups that word processing programs Microsoft Word or Libre Office insist on throwing into document files. That brought my thousand words down to 5,911 bytes. Compressing it using the zip program that came standard with my Linux laptop brought it down to 2,808 bytes. So it would appear that this old saw is slightly off. In this case, the ratio is more like 1 to 165.

Of course, I did cheat in order to arrive at this exact figure. First off, my calculations are about information, not worth. As a philosopher, I would argue that there is no objective answer to which has more value, my words or Lena's face. We might talk about the relative subjective values these two works of art have for you, the viewer, or about the price the two works would fetch on the open market, which reflects a kind of aggregate of the subjective values different buyers would assign to the two works. But I would prefer if we didn't, since I doubt my words would come out ahead in any such comparison.

There is also the fact that the image was very limited, zoomed in to only a small square of the original centerfold. This was not so much a cheat on my part as a dodge made necessary by the need for the more civilized areas of the internet to censor the centerfold's scandalous content and by the fact that the original centerfold is still under copyright – two reasons why Lena's figure might not be the best image to be used as a standard which should be commonly available to every single technologist working in image technology and related fields.

A further cheat is that the PNG format, like virtually all image formats, was designed with Lena's own lovely figure in mind. According to the PNG format and the coders who programmed it, there is very little that is 'surprising' about her image. There is potential for unfairness here, and room for morality to raise its ugly head once again. If you work in portraiture, it seems likely that the technology that surrounds us will be gentler with your work than if you work with, say, highly abstract and noisy pieces with very high entropy. But the same is also true if your portraits feature white bodies rather than Black ones. Thanks to the decision computer programmers made back in the 1970s, our technology 'believes' that white skin is 'expected' and Black skin is 'surprising.'

This kind of algorithmic racism, which is embedded in the very logic of the computers that surround us, is an extension of and metaphor for the irrational and unjust biases and prejudices that the vast majority of us have. Much of what people in positions of privilege do – like pass

around centerfolds at work – is ‘expected’ and taken to be harmless, while much of what people in subordinated positions do – like object to centerfolds being passed around at work – is ‘surprising’ and experienced as dangerous. In order to stop further algorithmic racism and to help women and other people feel more comfortable in STEM workplaces, Lena herself has asked that her centerfold no longer be used as a standard test image.

In order for us to become more moral as a society, some of us, artists perhaps, need to perceive the world around us in a less lossy fashion and to tell the rest of us what they have discovered. To quote the Orange Catholic Bible, “what senses do we lack that we fail to see the world around us?” This is why I am so interested in and confused by morality: How can I justify myself, my actions, and my values to a truly innocent intelligence, to a Martian, to an AI, to a sociopath, to a child, to an angel, to God, to my own artificially and artfully innocent and ignorant conscience? If we do discover, create, or permit such audiences, such recording angels, to evaluate our works, there will still be the obstacle of allowing ourselves to listen to these critics, given that we are all, to some degree or other, blinded and deafened by our own privilege.

In nature, as in art and culture, there are forces that reduce entropy, that seek to take the noise out of information. There are also processes that increase entropy by introducing potentially meaningful noise.

I’m told that in Hinduism, there is a triple supreme deity: Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer. Brahma is seen as a bit of an idiot, and Shiva is the most popular and the most widely worshiped of the three.

There are echoes of this in evolutionary theory.

Mutations are the initial creations, and they are mindlessly created by things like cosmic rays (from quasars farting billions of years ago and billions of light years away) and radiation (from terrestrial minerals randomly decaying, according to the indeterminate roll of a quantum die or the shuffling of a deck of quantum cards).

Natural selection is the destroyer, imposing purpose and meaning by ruthlessly editing out genes that fail to fit the environment, along with the individuals that carry those ‘faulty’ ‘low-value’ genes.

Reproduction is a preserver, but an imperfect one, and this imperfection is reflected in the statistical sampling errors that cause genetic drift. Genetic drift, like natural selection, reduces

diversity and entropy, but in a less purposeful way. Instead of imposing purpose on the various phenotypic traits exhibited in the population, genetic drift imposes a meaningless and purposeless conformity on the population's genes. In the absence of mutation and natural selection, genetic drift will cause any finite population of replicators to become more and more uniform over time. This 'force' works fastest on small populations, and when a population becomes inbred, lethal genetic variants can spread through the entire population before natural selection can weed them out, dooming the entire population to extinction – much like an art movement that has become too enclosed and self-referential.

The two biggest obstacles that our living world is currently struggling to overcome are climate change and the loss of bio-diversity due to loss of 'wild' habitat. Both of these challenges are the results of human action.

Over a long enough timeline, mutations and adaptive radiations filling emptied-out or newly-created ecological niches will eventually regenerate the biodiversity that we humans have destroyed. But natural evolution cannot regrow biodiversity over any *human* scale of time. I heard some story on a science podcast about how if we stopped making species extinct right this second, it would take evolution something like 100,000 or 500,000 years to restore the diversity we humans have destroyed during our entire 150,000 year career on this planet. If current trends continue for another 50 years, that figure will go up to something like 5 million years. There are, of course, some things we humans can do to accelerate this process of healing. There is some talk of "assisted evolution," such as artificially breeding coral in labs to withstand the elevated temperatures that will come with climate change, and then releasing the coral back into the wild, or by using CRISPR to transfer genes between closely related species which can no longer naturally inter-breed, introducing some fresh genetic variety that natural selection might be able to sink its teeth into. But these are emergency measures, uncertain, expensive, and potentially dangerous.

It can be hard to realize and accept that we mortal humans can have such an impact on the natural world, on God's Creation. But if you took all of the birds in the world and massed them together into a huge ball of bird-flesh, two-thirds of that ball of birds would consist of domesticated chickens. There is more ocean water displaced by our ocean-going vessels (mostly cargo freighters) than by all the fishes in the sea. It would be difficult for us to extinguish all life on our planet, since microbes penetrate the rocks beneath our feet for miles. But an all-out nuclear exchange could potentially make our species extinct, and climate change could potentially wreck

our civilization. Life and the planet might persist, but we would be gone, taking many species with us.

Economics is a major cause of biodiversity loss. Land that is allowed to be ‘wild’ – not formally held to be under ‘economic production,’ according to our own human standards – still provides humans with bio-services, by providing habitat for wildlife. For example, having mosquitoes around sucks – literally – but if you have to have mosquitoes around, it’s better to have 5 species of mosquitoes in your area than just one. That’s because if a new mosquito-borne illness arises (thanks to evolution), there’s a good chance that only one species of mosquito will be vulnerable to carrying it. Having 5 species of mosquitoes instead of just one will reduce your exposure to the new disease by a factor of 5.

Mosquitoes provide this service whether we want them to or not – and whether we pay them for that service or not. Which means that mosquitoes can’t use their income they would get from providing that service to rent or buy land that they need in order to hatch their eggs. Which in turn means that the market value their habitat lands have in our human free market does not reflect the true value those habitat lands have for humanity, given the bio-services its wildlife provides us.

This means that the system – the market – our human society uses to regiment and organize land is not providing a true reflection of the value of those lands, and is not organizing land use in a way that optimizes human happiness. Because our market fails to assess these habitat lands at their true value, it is cheap and easy for them to be placed under ‘economic production’ (farming, logging, etc.) in ways that will damage or destroy their ability to support wildlife. That means that populations of endangered species will be fragmented into smaller and smaller and more isolated patches of land, reducing the diversity of these populations and their available genetic information. This, in turn, leads to inbreeding and extinction.

It has been observed that indigenous peoples are better at using their lands in ways that better preserves biodiversity than how we in the WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) use the lands we control and inhabit. One possible explanation for this is that many indigenous peoples have renewed their focus on living in harmony with nature after coming into contact with the WEIRD, redefining their own cultures in contrast to our own land-gobbling ways. Cultures define their Selves by distinguishing themselves in opposition to the Other, in a process

that anthropologists like David Graeber call “schismogenesis.” Yet another way to increase entropy.

But even if indigenous cultures weren’t striving to remake themselves into ecological saints, there would still be a good chance that they would be better at preserving biodiversity than the WEIRD. That is because of the scale indigenous cultures operate at. A given indigenous culture is generally confined to a single region, so the people who constitute that culture are forced to adapt their methods of production to their local environment. But we in the WEIRD operate on a global scale. Cotton is grown in the same way, using the same methods, in the American South, in Egypt, in Burkina Faso. Because of that globalized scale, there is pressure to make the environment fit our crops rather than make our crops fit the environment. That means more fertilizer, more irrigation, more pesticides, etc.

Globalized cotton doesn’t just use the same methods and processes across the entire globe. It also uses the same seed, produced by the same company – Monsanto. The free market model economists use to talk about the economy assumes that competition is possible and easy to come by, that the “cost of entry” into a market is “negligible.” In a truly free market, resource allocation becomes “Pareto efficient” because if any single firm charges too much – more than the marginal cost of production – another firm will be able to step in and make a profit by underselling them. But, in the real world, free markets tend to collapse into systems of monopolies. Ironically, one of the few things that can keep a free market free is constant governmental intervention, aimed at keeping monopolies from forming and breaking them apart when they do form. Left to its own devices, the market will act to reduce competition – and by reducing competition, also reduce diversity, entropy, information. Nature abhors a free market, and our current unfree markets are returning nature’s disfavor.

If we accept that the only thing that matters in morality is human happiness and/or rights, then the only reason morality should enter into our conversations about the environment is because the profits taken by those humans who benefit from destroying the environment are being paid for by other humans who are injured by this destruction, and who did not consent to this transaction. On this view, the damage being done to non-human nature by humanity as a whole is ‘only’ wrong (from the standpoint of humanity as a whole) in the same way that punching yourself in the face is wrong. It’s not so much immoral as it is stupid.

I believe that non-human sentient creatures like dogs and chimps do have some rights, which we should respect. I'm against animal cruelty. But I am also not a vegetarian. Vegetarianism is easy to argue for from a theoretical standpoint, but it is difficult for its propaganda to win out against the human desire for animal flesh. It is much harder, even from a theoretical standpoint, to argue that an entire species as a whole (as opposed to the individual organisms that compose it, which may or may not be sentient), or non-living things like lakes and mountains have rights. It might be useful to create the legal fiction that they do, in the same way that our law currently chooses to see corporations as fictitious people, but I doubt that any such claim would be literally true.

It would be easier to argue that a corporation is literally a person, but as the joke goes, I won't believe a corporation is a person until I see the State of Texas execute one. A corporation is intelligent, and can even display pain, as a classical behaviorist would define it: It can change how it will perform in the future in reaction to noxious stimuli now, like a drop in its sales. A corporation can learn. But can a corporation literally *suffer*, or experience joy? That seems implausible. And what implications does the moral value of a corporate "slow artificial intelligence" have for the moral rights of the faster AIs we might eventually create on computers, or embody in robots? How can we tell if an AI or a robot is capable of suffering or joy?

Even if we grant that only humans have moral rights (a somewhat extreme claim), we should be doing far more to protect the environment we humans live in than we currently are – for the sake of humans, if not for the sake of the environment. That is the extent to which morality enters into this conversation.

How does this natural information tie back into art? Damon quotes Kazimir Malevich as saying that we human beings observe in nature the unconscious, "disorderly" activity of the elements. We then try to arrange this in conformity with the "lawfulness" of our own consciousness.

To translate this into modern, scientific, information theory terms, when we – especially artists – look at nature, we are taking in information that is somehow "disorderly." Malevich suggests – but does not outright state – that this information is then presented to us by our own unconscious and is then interpreted by our "lawful" consciousness minds.

As we have seen, evolution needs a source of randomness, and it literally gets that randomness from the disorderly activity of the elements. Cosmic rays from exploding quasars and radiation from decaying radioactive elements are just two major sources of the randomness that powers the mutations that drive evolution by natural selection. Computers also need a source of disorderly information to power things like encryption, and the best place computers can look for that lack of order is, also quite literally, through the disorderly activity of the elements.

In order to get the randomness they need, computers observe the external physical world, through whatever senses their programmers and their hardware permit them, usually by counting the slight arrhythmias in some approximately rhythmic physical motion. For example, if the computer has hard-drives, it can count the number of rotations the platters of its hard-drives make per a span of time, focusing on the fluctuations in the smallest and most sensitive figures. Or, if the computer does not have a hard-drive, but does have a user, it can count the slight lack of rhythm the user has when clacking her fingers on the keyboard.

But the purest source of randomness comes from Geiger counters counting the arrhythmic click of subatomic particles leaving a sample of a radioactive element. Radiation follows the weird and counterintuitive rules of quantum mechanics. Scientists can predict the probability that an unstable nucleus will emit radiation over a given period of time, but they are completely unable to predict the exact moment when a quantum of radiation will be emitted.

There are grosser approximations of randomness, like the flip of a coin, the roll of a die, the shuffle of a deck of cards. These systems are chaotic, designed so that slight deviations in initial conditions can multiply themselves into disproportionately divergent outcomes. But these chaotic systems are still deterministic, and, in theory, if a scientist had exact knowledge of the initial conditions, they would be able to predict how the coin or die would land or how the deck of cards would arrange themselves. (It is extremely unlikely that quantum indeterminacy can have an effect on a system that operates at the comparatively massive scale of a dice-roll – or, for that matter, at the scale of a human neuron. At these scales, quantum noise tends to cancel itself out.) An unstable nucleus, operating at the quantum scale, is under no such limitation.

If all artists got from nature was randomness, then I suppose they might as well hold a sample of uranium up to their closed eyes. They might get some inspiration from the quantumly random blue flashes of light they would see, as the radiation interacted with the vitreous humors



of their eyeballs. Eventually, the artists would get brain cancer from the radiation, but surely great art is worth suffering and dying for, right?

But when artists look at nature, I don't think they are looking for randomness, so much as meaning. In order to understand meaning, as opposed to information, we would need to leave the certainties of mathematics behind for the formalized ignorance of philosophy. Meaning, like morality and beauty, is a slippery concept, and an entire field of philosophy is dedicated to its study. But there does seem to be a consensus that meaning is somehow linked to purpose. And nature, thanks to evolution by natural selection and the *telos* natural selection imposes on all living organisms (or, more precisely, on all imperfectly reproducing and differentially 'dying' systems, whether they are 'living' or not) abounds with purpose. In nature, all organisms 'strive' to achieve reproductive success, to have as many children and grandchildren as they can, by any means necessary or possible.

But this purpose, unlike the planned and orderly teleology of human design, is expressed chaotically.

In *The Triple Helix*, Richard Lewontin talks about "norms of reaction," mathematical graphs that record the phenotypes (the numerically measurable traits of living bodies) organisms of the same genotype develop in reaction to a range of environments. The norms of reaction of wild organisms are chaotic, demonstrating that for a given genotype, there is no single natural environment, no single natural phenotype. By contrast, domesticated species, especially breeds and strains used in industrialized agriculture, have relatively flat norms of reaction. It is better for a farmer to have a consistent yield year after year rather than a bumper crop one year and just a few grains the next. So humans breed crops that are relatively insensitive to their environment, and will ignore small changes in it. Wild organisms are chaotic and, in some cases, even truly random. (There's what Lewontin calls "developmental noise," from such things as dividing cells getting uneven shares of certain large macro-molecules. Plausibly, quantum noise *can* have an impact here, through the random collisions of Brownian motion.) By comparison, domesticated organisms are orderly, linear, deterministic, measured against a set of phenotypic criteria that breeders expect them to conform to, and who will cull any individual that fails to measure up.

Life, in turn, has a purposeful but chaotic effect on its environment, like moss slowly turning bare unliving rock into soil. Biologists, these days, are excited about niche construction and micro-environments. Wind chill cools us partially because it forces the evaporation of

moisture on our skin, but also because it disturbs the micro-environment of the thin layer of heated air our bodies surround us with.

We humans do shape our environment, using both our bodies and our minds. As Damon points out, other critters do as well. But it can be difficult to draw the line between the purpose evolution by natural selection imposes and the purpose critters create for themselves through their own consciousnesses, through their own beliefs and desires, which are shaped by, but not determined by, genetic and memetic evolution. Beavers build dams, but from their own point of view, they do not do so in order to build ponds. Scientists put loudspeakers playing the sound of trickling streams into the beaver enclosures at zoos, and observed beavers obsessively covering those loudspeakers with mud. From this, they concluded that the reason beavers build dams is that they hate the sound of running water. From the point of view of the beavers – but not from the point of view of natural selection – the ponds that result from dam-building are just a happy accident of the beaver’s quest for peace and quiet.

As for humans, there is a theory that we humans evolved our ability to speak because midwives needed to coordinate the process of helping our women give birth to our large-headed infants. Midwifery is a task that requires intelligence and communication, and, while it might not require the literal blueprints used in more formal and masculine-coded genres of design, midwives might well find anatomical charts to be incredibly helpful in their work. Regardless of how this ability originated, our human ability to speak, to write, to design, gives us an ability to bind time that is unique and almost without precedent in the animal kingdom. Our ability to plan across time makes us intelligent designers *par excellence*.

In addition to engineering and other forms of design, we also use this ability to plan, communicate, and co-ordinate to make art, without really understanding *why* we make art. Do we really have any more insight into why we make art than beavers have insight into why they make dams?

When artists look at nature, they can see purpose in motion. One of the lessons evolution by natural selection teaches us is the value of exaptation, of using one purposeful thing for a different task. It can be difficult for evolution to come up with something entirely new. “Hopeful monsters” are hard to come by through random mutation. But a flap of skin that evolved for slowing a critter’s fall from a tree can be polished and ground through chaotic mutation and probabilistic death into a wing that enables that critter’s descendants to truly fly. As Adam Savage of *Mythbusters* fame

put it, “every tool is a hammer.” Once evolution gets its hands on a system that can perform a function in even the most rudimentary and halting fashion, it can easily optimize it towards doing that function almost perfectly.

Perhaps when artists borrow from nature, they are also performing exaptation? Taking some element from nature that was originally assigned to do some purpose, co-opting it to serve some slightly different new purpose, and then refining it so it fulfills that purpose better and closer to optimality.

Alternatively, when artists observe nature, it might not be that omnipresent living purpose that they are taking in. They might just be looking for scenes that they and their audiences will find emotionally evocative – in good part because of how evolution by natural selection has shaped our emotional reactions to our environment and the temptations and dangers in it. I am not an artist, so what can I say?

I can only ask questions: How would you, as an artist, go about creating art that would appeal to non-human intelligences, like Martians from the Red Planet, the Roswell Greys, or furry blue creatures from Alpha Centauri? Or, for that matter, gorillas, elephants, or dolphins, who may lack our grammatical abilities but are clearly sentient?

Whatever this information artists take in from nature is, exactly, Malevich suggests that this information (whatever it is) is introduced into our conscious minds via our subconscious minds. And in order to understand that process, we must turn to the science of psychology.

Psychology has changed a lot since the days of Freud. Nobody takes Freud seriously anymore, outside the fields of art and literary criticism. Freud makes for fun and interesting stories, symbolism, and interpretations, but Freud was not a good scientist, and his theories are largely untestable – meaning that, from a scientific standpoint, they do not even succeed at being false. A Positivist philosopher (which I am not) would say that because Freud’s theories are untestable they are meaningless. But, like I said, meaning is something we philosophers are still trying to understand.

Freud unintentionally jump-started the development of psychology as a science, since he provoked the next generation of psychologists into turning the field into a true science in order to get over the embarrassing nature of their intellectual father. (Working out their Oedipal Complexes

in the process, no doubt.) Behaviorism, like other skeptical schools, like Positivism and Empiricism, cleaned out the magical and superstitious hoarded baggage of its predecessors a little too thoroughly, throwing out many things which later proved to be necessary. But also like those other skeptical schools, it was a useful purgative, a step in the right direction. Since then, scientific psychology has managed to add some necessary re-complicating structures to the firm and austere foundation provided by Behaviorism.

One thing – almost the only thing – that modern psychology agrees with Freud about is the existence of the subconscious.

We are still trying to understand exactly what consciousness is. But it appears to be a kind of loopback network, something less like a single computer and more like an entire internet that allows various computers to talk to each other. Saying that a drug is a ‘general anesthetic’ is just another way of saying that it’s “a neurotoxin that won’t actually kill you in the dose we’ll give you, but you’ll still lose some brain cells even if everything goes as planned.” So in addition to our philosophical desire to know ourselves, there is also a powerful practical need to look for the “neural correlates of consciousness,” which anesthesiologists can observe so that they can make sure that we patients are, in fact, unconscious during surgery without the anesthesiologists killing more of our brain cells than they absolutely need to. One symptom of consciousness is that different areas in the brain begin to synchronize their brain waves, a sign that those distant regions of the brain are coming into communication with each other.

Consciousness is only a very small part of our minds (or, rather, an emergent network our minds bring into being), called in only when there is some conflict that our “sub-personal psychological modules” cannot handle on their own. The science fiction writer and marine biologist Peter Watts has said that, from the point of view of these isolated expert systems, our conscious mind is something like the Pointy-Haired Boss from the Dilbert comics – or would be, if those isolated expert systems were capable of having a point of view at all, which they are not. Our conscious minds operate slowly, and make many mistakes. But our conscious minds are necessary in order to consciously figure out what we should do when things are not going as planned and to co-ordinate between the isolated expert systems.

Our consciousness and its boundaries are relatively well defined, if poorly understood. But our subconscious is not so well understood. There is no *the* subconscious – there are only the vast and unexplored islands and continents of our minds that fail to fall under the narrow light of our

consciousnesses. But there are at least three areas of life where our consciousnesses come into contact with what is going on in our sub-consciousnesses.

The most obvious way is through dreaming. We do not truly know why we sleep. Our best guess is that sleep first began simply as a way of keeping motile animals from wasting metabolic energy not needed for finding food or mates and encouraging them to hide away from predators by programming them to enter a period of dreamless metabolic dormancy at certain times of day. We think the other aspects of sleep were added on later, like the extra maintenance cycles a maintenance department performs when their factory is already shut down due to an economic lay-off, completing tasks that were postponed when demand on the factory was too high to justify taking its machines off-line.

REM sleep is one of those forms of extra maintenance that are reserved for when we are dormant in sleep. Our best guess is that the reason we have REM sleep is that it is part of the process of forgetting. One of the ironies of information theory is that it does not take energy to store or even retrieve information. In order to store information, all you have to do is allow the cosmos to act on you. In order to retrieve information, all you have to do is allow energy to flow down those same pathways again. But in order to forget, you have to act on a portion of the cosmos, namely, your own memory-banks, restoring them to a low-entropy state of blankness. That act of restoring ignorance does require energy, and inevitably adds to the entropy-haunted memories of the cosmos as a whole. Our brains are highly evolved forgetting machines, pruning away noisy neural pathways that are no longer needed in order to restore quiet and orderly efficiency to the brain as a whole.

We think that during REM sleep, our brains are indexing our memories, determining which are still important and need to be retained or even reinforced, and which are no longer necessary and should be pruned and extinguished. But not all periods of REM sleep are periods of dreaming. That's because a true dream (arguably) requires a form of consciousness. During most periods of REM sleep, we are truly unconscious and the period passes without leaving a mark in our memories. (Aside from the forgetting that REM sleep permits, which leaves us clearer-headed when we wake up.) But, occasionally, our consciousnesses do come on-line while this process is going on, and we try to impose meaning on the buzzing and booming confusion that is filling our sensoriums as flashes of the memories being indexed flow across them.

The images we see or otherwise sense during dreams are not truly random. Our brains are no better at producing true randomness than computers are, and a great deal less precise in how they handle what pseudo-randomness does come their way. Our brains much prefer to run along in the same channels of association that has worked for them in the past, rather than tramping down new trails into some virgin mental territory. (This is why predictive typing on your smart phone works so well, along with the redundancies of natural language. It doesn't take too much artificial intelligence to have some idea of what you're going to type next.) But the brain does process things in an associative rather than linear manner, and there may well be some chaos in the presumably deterministic order the brain processes its contents in. The images our dreaming brains present us with may not be truly random, but they do provide a good illusion of randomness for our conscious or near-conscious minds to work with, interpret, and question.

The philosopher Daniel Dennett has observed that you can come close to replicating the nonsensical logic of dreams by playing games of 20 Questions with a coin-flip providing random yes-or-no answers to your consciously selected questions. Your consciousness will arrange the "disorderly" randomness of the coin-flips into conformity with the "lawfulness" of narrative expectations, resulting in the creation of a dream-like narrative.

Another way our consciousnesses come into contact with our subconscious is through the use of skills that we have already mastered. When a baseball pitcher is "in the zone," he is actually less aware of what is going on in the game than the average spectator in the stands. That is because he is firmly in the control of the "sub personal mechanisms" that constitute his pitching skills. His conscious mind is almost offline, perhaps thinking about what he will eat for dinner that night.

His conscious mind will only be brought back to focus on the external world if he makes a mistake. That is because when a sub personal mechanism that constitutes a skill detects an error in how that skill was performed, it triggers an orientating reflex that brings the conscious mind back on-line, and invites the conscious mind to figure out just what went wrong. The information the conscious mind gathers on this point is called the "Knowledge of the Result," and the player will use this information to modify the routine he will use the next time he attempts to pitch the ball. If that new modification works, then the modification will be reinforced and become incorporated into the player's skill in pitching.

This Knowledge of the Result is an extremely important aspect of how we humans learn skills. It is similar to how evolution by natural selection or the more basic kind of learning involved in behavioral or operant conditioning works, but it is also different enough from those other ‘learning’ processes to be interesting. In evolution by natural selection, the success or failure of an inheritable trait in promoting the reproductive success of its host *just is* the modification of the frequency of that trait in the next generation. The relationship is a constitutive one, not a causal one. In human skill learning, the relationship between success or failure and modification is a causal one, not a constitutive one. The success – or more importantly, the failure – of a skill provides the human with (imperfect) information about what went wrong, and on the basis of that information, the human will (imperfectly) modify their routine in the next trial. That modification is a kind of intelligent design, albeit of a relatively limited sort. In evolution by natural selection, by contrast, in order for there to be a *difference* in the relative reproductive success of a gene, there must already be at least one additional variant of that gene to compete against. (By contrast, skill-learning involves the progressive modification of a single prototype, rather than competition between different variant gene-types.) And, most commonly, such a new variant will be the result of a random – perhaps *truly* random – mistake in the replication process.

Like evolution by natural selection, learning as theorized by classical behaviorism also relies on unconscious, unintelligent, meaningless randomness as its source of new variations and modifications that more sensate rewards and punishments will reinforce or extinguish... but I digress. Forgive me, but this information was part of my doctoral thesis, and you are the first audience I’ve had to share it with except for my dissertation committee.

(For any epistemologists who happen to be reading this, the key insight is that the Knowledge of the Result involved in human skill learning is transient, only needing to be retained in memory until the subject completes the next trial in which they practice that same skill. If the skill is a cognitive one, which is used to form beliefs, then this Knowledge of the Result (which is actually a belief, and might not amount to knowledge, as epistemologists define those terms) is part of the causal chain that leads to belief formation, and it helps define the nature of the belief-forming mechanism that is so relevant for reliabilists. But the Knowledge of the Result will no longer be accessible through conscious reflection, since the only memory trace it leaves behind is in the shape it has helped carve into the final shape of the cognitive skill. The cognitive skill itself

is stored in non-accessible procedural memory. Therefore, the Knowledge of the Result does not count as ‘evidence,’ as the evidentialists have defined that term.)

I believe the phenomenon of mistakes is of great importance in the creative process. Earlier, I mentioned that mistakes in executing a painting – like the puff from a gnat’s wing trembling a hair on your brush – might inject some useful and valuable entropy into the final work. But I don’t think this kind of ‘noise’ is truly random, anymore than the information that artists absorb from nature is truly random. Instead, I think overcoming mistakes and failures provide a way of introducing fresh *purpose* into a creative work.

Adam Savage has mentioned that whenever he Makes something, the final result is never what he had originally planned or envisioned. It is not necessarily better or worse, but it is never identical. If I remember correctly (and I may be mistaken), Adam also said that he usually makes sure he has enough supplies to execute the project twice over, simply to give himself room to make mistakes.

I experience the same thing in my own writing: My final product is never exactly the same as what I had planned in advance. It is not necessarily better or worse than my initial inspiration, but I would say that it is generally *richer*, more organic perhaps.

Part of the creativity, entropy, and purpose that mistakes introduce into our works comes from our struggles to overcome them. It might often be the case that our initial inspiration was incomplete or inconsistent, and translating our wisp of inspiration into the real material world reveals those flaws. Realizing those flaws brings about that same orienting reflex that we use to generate Knowledge of the Result, and our conscious minds, summoned by the failures of our “sub-personal mechanisms,” are called on to compensate and work around those flaws. Our memories of that work, much like our memories of that Knowledge of the Result, might be transient and fleeting, lost in our memories of our creative haze and reverie. But that work of imperfect perfection surely plays an important role in injecting that meaning that our audiences often find in our works which we failed to notice ourselves.

But there is more to mistakes than our struggles with them. I think it was Ray Bradbury who said that one of the secrets of creativity is to “trust your mistakes.” I know that John Darnielle of The Mountain Goats often composes his songs on piano, since he has less mastery of that



instrument than he does of his guitars. He intentionally messes around with instruments and techniques that he hasn't fully mastered yet simply to maximize his chances of making mistakes.

I see some of this in my own work as well. Philosophers try to apply the Principle of Charity towards other philosophers – to put the other person's views, positions, arguments, into the strongest possible form that is consistent with the spirit rather than the letter of what they were saying before beginning our attack on those views, positions, arguments. But I often find that when I read other philosophers, I am being *too* charitable towards them. I interpret them as saying things that are more consistent with my own beliefs (which I, of course, believe to be the truest reflection of reality, since I am arrogant in that manner) than what they are actually saying. And I generally find this ego-centric interpretation of the other philosopher to be disheartening: If this other philosopher was already saying this, then what am I actually adding to the conversation that's new? Fortunately, this overly-charitable ego-centricity can be cured by understanding the other philosopher better. I have often said that it is impossible to truly understand a single philosopher in isolation. In order to understand her, you must understand her position within the larger dialectic – you must also read the philosophers she is reacting to, and the philosophers who are reacting to her. By understanding that dialectic and that chain of reactions, understandings, and misunderstandings, you gain a greater parallax view of what that central philosopher is truly saying. And that deeper view of what that other philosopher is actually saying places the true uniqueness of my own discoveries into greater relief, and makes the differences between us more apparent.

There is a saying in Silicon Valley that “if you want to double your rate of success, you need to triple your rate of failure.” If this is true in engineering, where success and failure are reasonably clear-cut and objective, how much more true is it in more unconstrained forms of creativity, where success and failure is a much more subjective and value-laden matter?

The third way the conscious mind comes into contact with the subconscious combines aspects of both the sleeping state of partial consciousness that is dreaming and the waking state of partial unconsciousness that is the masterful use of skills. This is what neurologists call the “default mode network,” which is the parts of the brain we use when we are day-dreaming and/or our minds are wandering. I suspect that this is kind of semi-consciousness that is the most important when it comes to art. It is certainly the most important when it comes to writing, including philosophy.

I first became aware about the “default mode network” from reading a book on Zen meditation. The entire point of Zen and Zen-style mindfulness meditation is to activate this default mode network – and then gradually silence it.

Most of what follows comes from Wikipedia’s articles on the subject.

It was generally assumed by neurologists that when our minds are not working on some set task, like a complex mathematical problem, our brains are at rest. The inventor of the EEG noticed that our brains remain active when we aren’t working clear back in 1929, but he was ignored by the larger neurology community. In the 1950s, another scientist discovered that our brains use almost as much metabolic energy when we aren’t doing anything as when we are, suggesting that either it doesn’t take much metabolic energy to power our minds, or that we are using our brains even during our down-times. In the 1970s, a scientist realized that the front parts of our brains actually get more blood flow when we’re resting. But things didn’t really take off until the 1990s, when things like PET scans and MRIs let us take a fine-grained look at both working and day-dreaming brains in action.

(But, since those scans mean strapping you down and putting your head in a narrow tunnel, scientists are afraid that part of what they’re picking up isn’t the parts of the brain that are in charge of day-dreaming, but parts of the brain that are involved in *claustrophobia*, without a task to distract the subjects from it. Science isn’t always an exact science...)

The scientists originally called this thing the “task negative network,” which they defined as the reverse corollary of the “task positive network,” that is, the parts of the brain that light up when they ask you to do something. But they changed it to “default mode network” when they realized that parts of the network are involved in some actual tasks. However, the default mode network is still defined as the opposite of the task positive network or networks.

Like the memory consolidation that’s at work during REM sleep, what we’re up to while we’re day-dreaming can be thought of as maintenance activities that our brains or minds do when we’re not using them for other, more urgent but perhaps less important, things.

There’s speculation that day-dreaming is involved in the formation of our narrative selves which help to constitute our identities. During day-dreaming, we’re reviewing our memories about events and facts about ourselves, reflecting on our traits and the descriptions we have of ourselves, and about our emotional states. We are literally dreaming ourselves – our *selves*, our souls, our essential natures – into being, when our minds are wandering.

We're also doing maintenance on our social selves. We're thinking about what others think and what they might or might not know, reflecting on their feelings and empathizing with them. We're reflecting on the justice or injustice of actions, the traits and status of groups and people within those groups, or, reflecting on our perceived lack of social interaction. (The default mode network tends to be especially active in people suffering from depression.)

The default mode network is also involved in that narrative time-binding that is unique or nearly unique to humans. We're remembering the past, imagining the future, reviewing episodic memories, and remembering and understanding narratives. (*Definitely* important for writers!)

And, importantly for artists: "Recent research has shown that the DMN is related to the perception of beauty, in which the network becomes activated in a generalized way to aesthetically moving domains such as artworks, landscapes and architecture. This would explain a deep inner feeling of pleasure related to aesthetics, interconnected with the sense of personal identity, due to the network functions related to the self."

There's a brief mention that the default mode network activates a split second after we complete a task... which suggests to me that it might be involved in our production of that Knowledge of the Result that is so important in how we humans learn skills. Upon reading this paragraph in an earlier draft, Damon commented that when he finishes a work, he experiences a brief moment of doubt as he evaluates his work. I consider this an anecdotal confirmation of this hypothesis, but I would encourage neurologists and psychologists to confirm this hypothesis with their own experiments. There is truth to the saying that the plural of 'anecdote' is 'data,' but I also try to keep in mind that 'anecdotal' rhymes with 'ass-pull' for a reason.

Here's another connection between the default mode network and the mastery of skills: Mind-wandering happens a lot when we're driving, which is a skill that most American adults have mastered long ago. We're so used to driving that it's mostly being handled by those unconscious sub-personal mechanisms that constitute our skills, with very little input needed from our conscious minds. Wikipedia says that this means that, under optimal conditions, driving requires little use of the task-positive network.

This suggests to me that it's not so much that we use our task-positive network when we're doing a task, but when we're doing a task that we *haven't yet mastered*. Mistakes call us back to consciousness, mastery lulls us into unconsciousness. Mastery and consciousness are opposites.

Our unconsciousness mastery of driving can lead to problems, of course, when we suddenly do require our task-positive network, when something out in the driving world is not going as planned or expected, but our conscious minds are wandering. I've heard that people with lower IQs are safer drivers, since they need to give their driving more conscious attention and are less likely to let their minds wander while driving.

As for me... One of the reasons I'm working as a high-speed food delivery expert is that gazing out the windshield is kind to my Seasonal Affective Disorder. (Sunlight is my happy-juice; much like Kal-El, I am powered by Earth's yellow sun.) But driving also gives me a chance to let my mind wander and for me to listen to podcasts, absorbing information through my ears while driving keeps my eyes and hands busy. It could be that part of what artists get from being in nature isn't just absorbing new information from the natural environment, but also a chance to let their minds wander, to review, consolidate, and digest the information they already have locked up inside their own heads.

There is also a downside to the default mode network. One trigger for day-dreaming and mind-wandering is when we have a lot of working memory to spare for it. But it can also be triggered when we have too much going on, and we've run out of working memory and other mental resources, and, as a result, we no longer have the executive function (that is, will power) that we need to keep our minds on the task at hand. Studies also suggest that people whose minds are wandering tend to be less happy than people whose minds are occupied with a task. If your day-dreams are pleasant ones, that can help, but a lot of our day-dreams are actually nightmares and make our moods even worse. And because an over-loaded mind can trigger mind-wandering, people are more likely to report mind-wandering when they are bored, stressed, or unhappy.

I have also noticed this in my own experience. The winter of 2020-2021 was particularly rough, not so much because I was more depressed than usual but because there was so much to be depressed about, given the pandemic and the state of politics. I found myself having to turn off the podcasts when I was in the truck, since my mind was already full of things to ruminate about. Listening to a podcast, especially one about politics, just added more to my pile, and I needed to digest what I already had.

This is also an issue in Zen-inspired mindfulness meditation. Most fans of meditation tell you about how much better it makes them feel. But meditation can also bring up dark demons from your subconscious, and people who are just getting into meditation can have problems addressing

them. In the deeper Zen tradition, part of the discipline lies in facing those Monsters From The Id, and recognizing them as not truly part of your not-self, but only “thoughts that think themselves.”

This dark side of mind-wandering might also be part of the reason artists are drawn to nature. Walking, like driving, is a skill we have long mastered, so it is an activity that leaves room in our working memories for our minds to wander. But there is also enough surprising and unexpected things happening out in nature to bring us back out of our black studies. Perhaps artists enjoy being alone with nature because being alone with their driving on our relatively orderly human-created roads is too dark for them?

Mind-wandering and the default mode network are highly important when it comes to writing. The most fundamental and most difficult part of writing is physically parking yourself in front of the keyboard and punching keys. “Writing is easy,” said some famous person, “all you have to do is sit in front of a typewriter and open up a vein.” But the most important, glowing, and glamorous parts of writing don’t happen in front of the keyboard. They happen in the shower, in the vegetable aisle in the supermarket, while driving. Those flashes of inspiration that get you past your writer’s block, that provide the initial spark for a story, that tell you what your character is going to do next. And the darkness that comes with mind-wandering is also a part of the writer’s art.

Is there something similar in the artist’s life? I cannot say.

Artists, philosophers, and writers: Daydreaming so you don’t have to? Daydreaming so that the narratives you day-dream about are pleasant ones, or at least ones that have happy endings? Daydreaming to comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable? Maybe all or some of that is part of our various job descriptions.

As a philosopher, it is easier for me to ask questions than it is for me to answer them. For answers to these questions, or at least fresh complications to them, I will now hand you over to the expert on art, Damon Freed.

# **Artistic Development**



Inner Chapter XI: The Present, 2006, Sand and Acrylic on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches





The Son, 2010, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches



My Mandala, for Happiness, 2011-2018, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

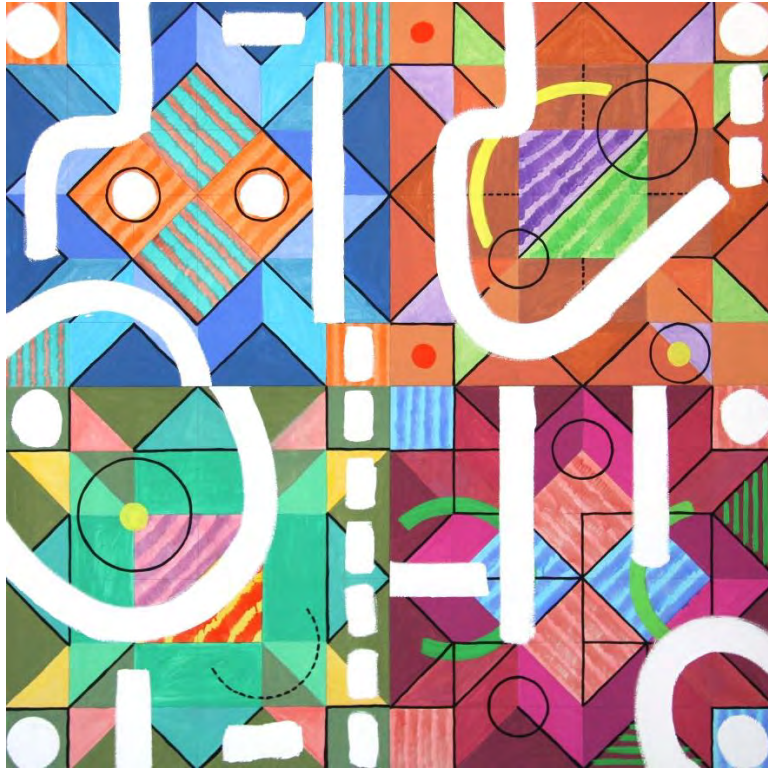




Warm Morale, 2010, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches



Atlantis, 2010, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

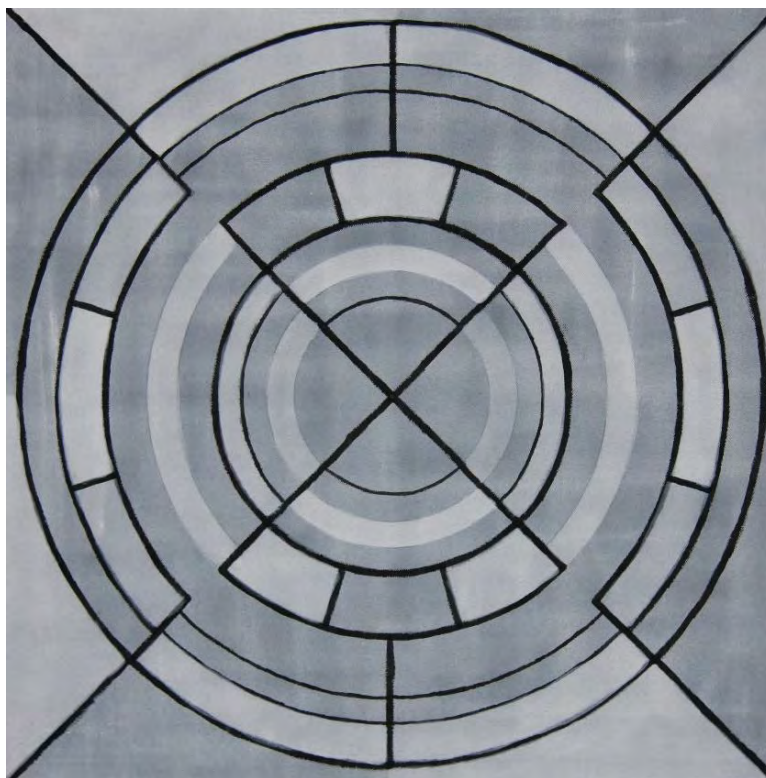


Strategy and Intuition, 2011-12, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, Four Panels, 72 x 72 inches

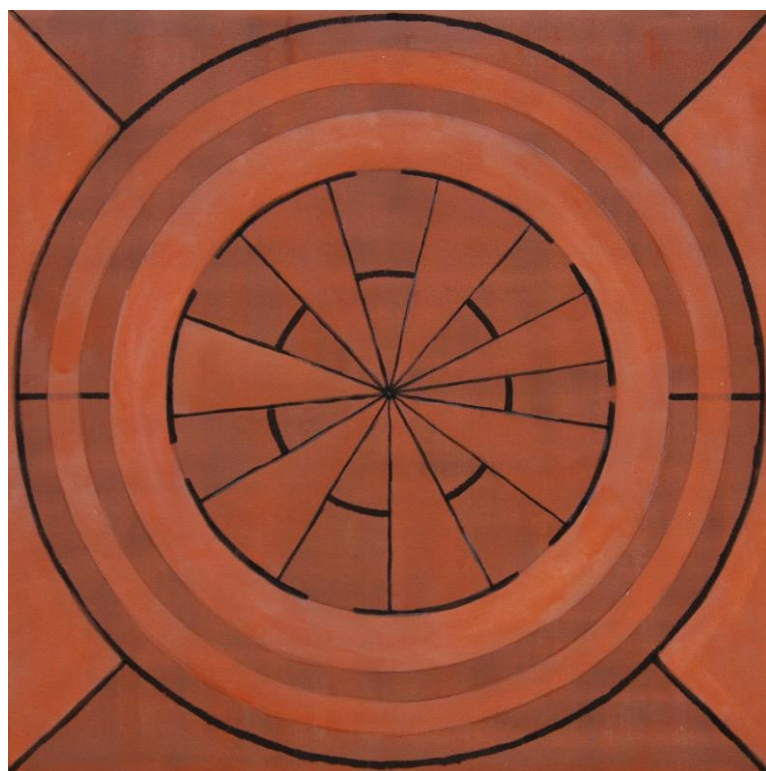


Four Mandalas for Stability, 2013, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, Four Panels, 72 x 72 inches

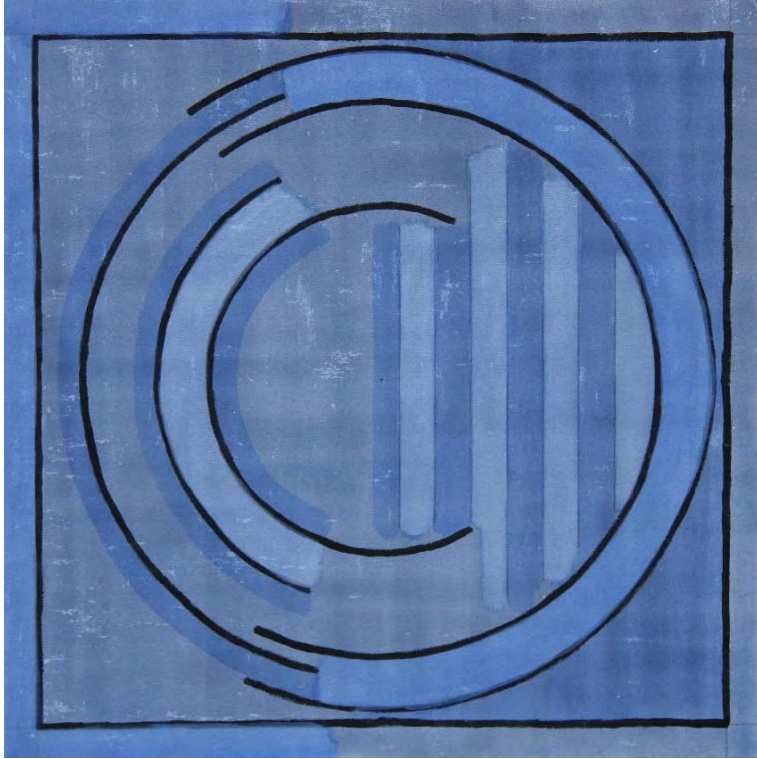




Monochrom #1, 2012, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 21 x 21 inches



Monochrome #2, 2012, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 21 x 21 inches



Monochrome #3, 2012, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 21 x 21 inches



Monochrome #4, 2012, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches





Bound, 2013, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches



Intuitive Measure, 2013, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches



Modern Transcendental, 2013, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches



222 Bowery, 2013, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

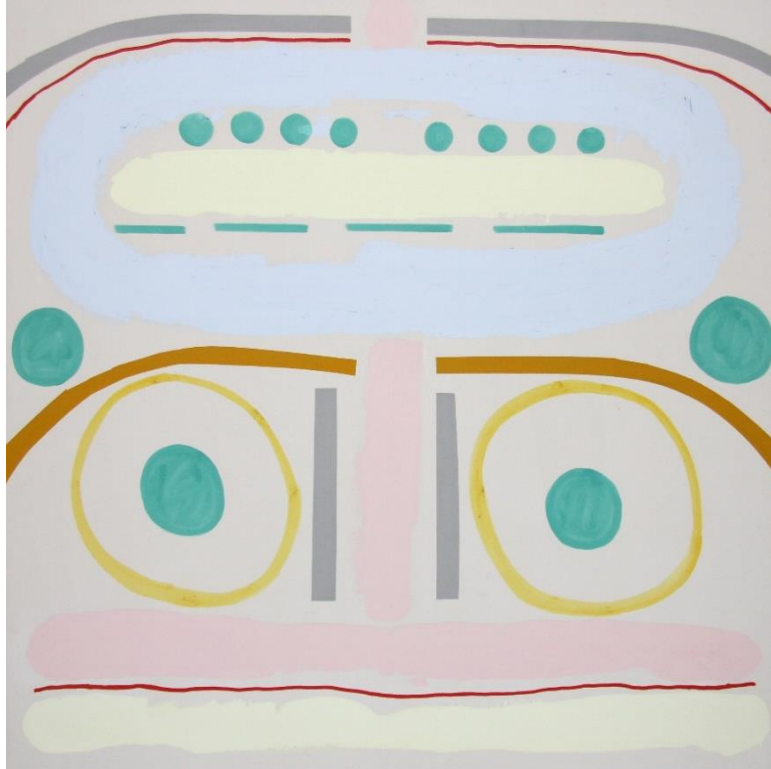




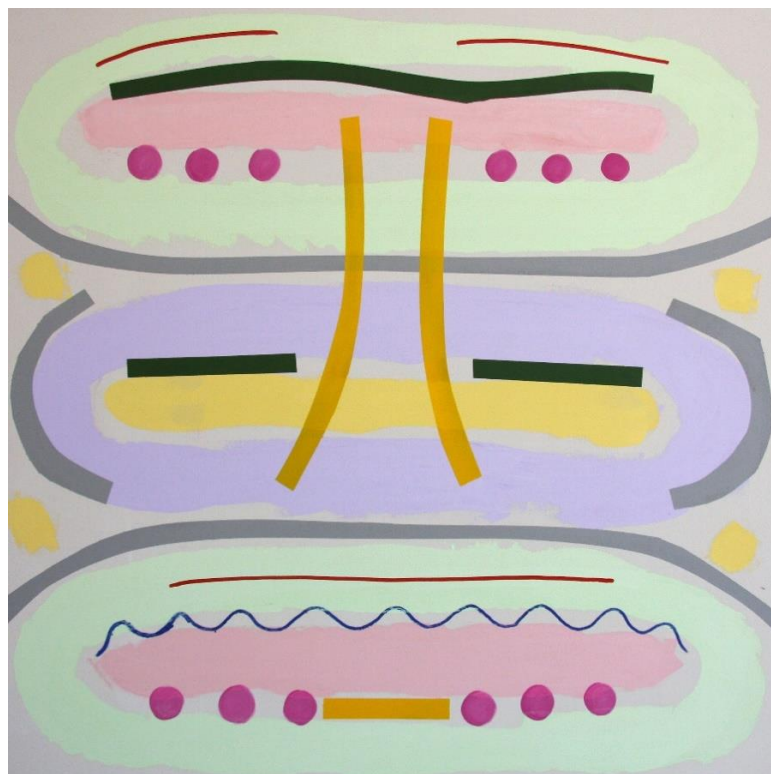
Tidal, 2013, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches



Modern Spiritual, 2013, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches



What Babies are Made Of, 2013, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

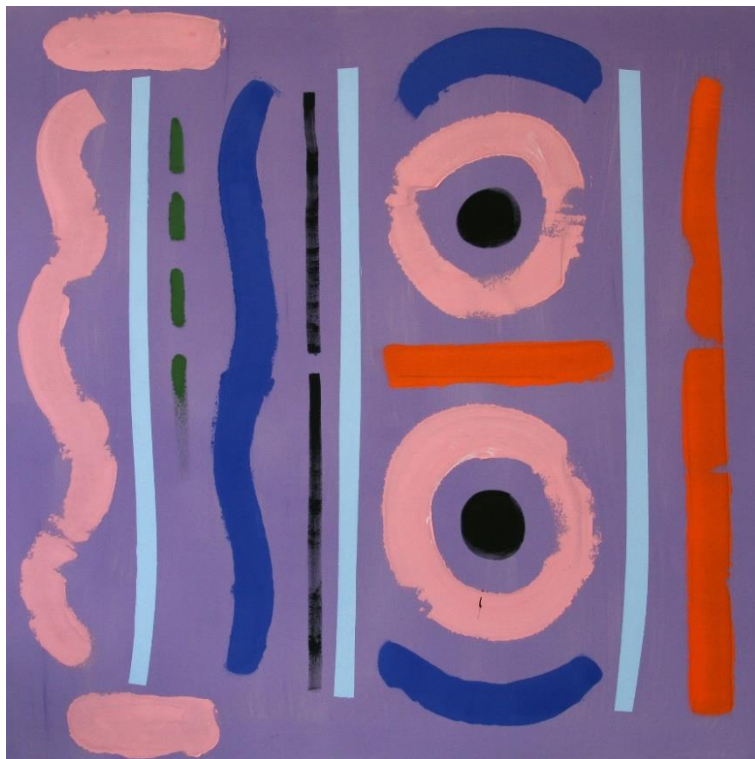


A Child is Born, 2013, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches





A Child of Our Time, 2013, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches



Spontaneous, 2015, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

# **Brief Thoughts and Essays, 2016-2024**



Unchanging, 2020, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

### **A Call to Students of Painting and Writing**

Painting is a discipline. Writing is a discipline. I agree with my dad in that it is not a practice, painting, and nor is writing. We are not practicing for anything. It is not a practice because once you have attained to your vision, your voice, you are assured and there are doubts, as with anything you do. I don't like my discipline referred to as a practice as it suggests unprofessionalism and the idea that there is an ongoing evolution. There is a sense of getting better, yes, but also, at times, there is a sense of doubt and getting worse. At a certain point you

become a professional and you express with clarity what is needed by you most of all and what you feel is needed for the world. If you are doing your job right, what is needed by you and what is needed for the world is similar. I will do my best to articulate.

It's true that there are failures along the way. But these failures are a result of you not following your inspiration. If you follow your inspiration to a tee you are on the track. Agnes Martin did great work in painting and she articulated with great clarity in painting and writing what inspiration is and what it means. She was the closest during her time to the process of life and art. I have written out of her voice many times. You must understand that art is a continuation and that as painters and writers it is important to remain humble, but be strong humble. If you are to follow your own voice and to be a voice for and of others, and if you are to obey what moves you most of the time, you mustn't stray from your honest inspirations.

What inspires is the greatest question. The most difficult question to answer. People. People are who and what inspires me most of the time. And on this occasion, I allow the inspirations of others to guide my voice and I am also obeying myself, my will. One obeys because all is done in love and we trust our process, *THEE* process. It is love and strength that is the guide no matter where it comes from, your inspiration. The closer you get to your voice the more positive the experience will be for you and for others. To lead by inspiration his and her hand into a place of inspiration is to often perform in solitude. It is not this way for most people, but for artists it is this way. Solitude takes great strength. It is what painting and writing take. Love, much love, and strength. It leads to a place of finding out. What is the source of this? You. I personally perceive a source because I was led to the source by my father. I got closer to myself as a result of following my own inspiration to become an artist early on. I saw in him a great freedom. Always there is a source. You are that source. Find the source and let it guide you then. This is to say, find yourself. Take risks on yourself. Your life will unfold more clearly, then.

Influences surround us. They are on all sides, let them in at times. I would not resist influence if it resonates with you. Influence can be positive and also negative. Try to balance yourself. It takes time knowing who your influences are, *your* influences.

Agnes Martin, Brice Marden, and my mother and father are mine. And of course, my sister and brothers. It takes great strength admitting to those who you strive to learn from. It takes an openness, a willing, a passionate feeling about their work, what they have done, and who they have become to be inspired by them.

You mustn't be too concerned with influences except when the time comes to be.

So, when painting and writing while being an artist, most importantly, do as you feel. Or, keep this in mind.





Twonism XVIII: Ascending Pigeons, 2016, Oil on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

### **A Change of Belief**

In recent days I suffered from a bipolar episode, my first in over three years. And although one could easily discredit my musings during that time as delusional, I felt a very close connection with God. Now, before you say anything or think it, I am aware this sounds cliché, and after all it goes against many of my previous writings concerning my beliefs toward the spiritual content of life. I was agnostic. You may wonder what this at all has to do with painting or writing, but I feel it has a great deal to do with inspiration. So from here on out I will be as honest as I can be with whatever part spirituality may play in the arts. At the same time, I don't plan to overwhelm you with some dogmatic aspects of religion.

I find it necessary to write about my work so that viewers are informed of the content should they desire to know. It seems more necessary to write about abstraction and nonobjective works because there is no evidence at all of a literal story in the paintings. As much as I love to write about balance and tension and harmony and all of the formal attributes of a painting it doesn't cut it. So look at it this way, a nonobjective painting, much like gazing over the vast landscape or sublime sunset, is a man-made version of that same sort of experience. Yet, it can also be a spiritual encounter. It is the opportunity for connection to something other than one's self, the intimate connection to another human being's psyche and inner world depicted on canvas through feeling.

So much of what I believe when it comes to painting was laid down by the Abstract Expressionists. In this sense, I owe a large debt of gratitude to their beliefs in what a painting can be. And although my image and techniques depart from their way of working, I feel as though the core desire for emotion, intellect, and spirituality is there. What turns me off more than anything when it comes to nonobjective painting is the simple belief in formal communication, that the painting is merely a visual stimulus and that we respond to only visually. When it comes down to it, perhaps we speak about paintings in that way so it's easy on us. As we know, we can't spend every waking hour contemplating the vast unknown, or God. It's strenuous. But, when in the mindset of questioning the unknown so much headway can be made. Our potential there is infinite so long as we remain aware.

## A Discipline

*"There's a bunch of fellows who can't tell good from bad but poke around in the scriptural teachings, hazard a guess here and there, and come up with an idea in words, as though they took a lump of shit, mushed it around in their mouth, and then spat it out and passed it on to somebody else. They're like those people who play pass-the-word parlor games, wasting their whole lives like that."*

—Translated by Burton Watson, *from the original Lin-Chi lu orated by the Zen master Lin-chi I-hsuan* (d. 866) T'ang period Ch'an master.

It's no different with artists. You can always tell the ones who are going to make it. They say very little about what they do and are about to do. Others ask the questions of them. It's easy to talk a good game, difficult to have one. You see, when the chips are down, the good ones keep moving. They don't need a deadline to enable themselves to work. The ends do not justify the means. The means is all there is. Like a mantra, you follow the work. You keep going. It is a discipline. Sometimes we are ahead, other times the work is ahead. You try to be one with the work. Either way, it is one thing to talk about it, another to actually do it.

## A Discourse, 2005-2022

I usually approach my paintings intuitively with some aspects of the work inevitably communicated ambiguously leading to miscommunication and misinterpretation. Yet, I can be adept with words when speaking in brief sessions like lectures and critiques. Even still, I may be more articulate when I write. So please consider these words in ‘addition’ to artist talks and critiques. In this short writing, I address formal issues and touch on meaning that I find within the work, but it is only meaning to me, and I don’t expect it to arise within the viewer’s mind exactly. I want to keep my statements personal and avoid writing that ventures beyond what it is I feel inside myself and within my own work. I believe a painting can give to the viewer by way of precise meaning and formal exactness, we are all experiencing the same content. Viewers bring to a painting what is inside of his and her own mind as well, and interpretation almost always varies due to this type of interference from them. This may seem like stating the obvious to some, but I think it is often forgotten when dealing with words that attempt to get at a painting, or at a certain ‘kind’ of painting, in a factual way.

An abstract feeling arises in my mind and affects my senses. Within calmness the feeling is clear, and I intuitively understand what to paint. Rarely do I see the painting in my mind’s eye before beginning this way. The feeling directs me until the painting and feeling are succinct. This is how I know when to finish. I want to make it clear that my work is not about a “look” and that I am not a materialist but that I do find the materiality of a painting equally important as the release from materiality into a metaphysical state of mind. Nothing in my paintings is factual, except for the material and the feelings. In starting, I know the first point of the first side of the first shape. From that point on the painting is made without thinking, responding only to how I feel and to what I see in front of me—occurring from that which I feel.

Shape, shape is important to me. It changes with each piece but the form remains the same. The intuitive drawing of a shape directly onto the surface creates the composition and both shape and composition occur at the same time with little planned and the shapes are not placed with predetermination. In writing “little is planned” I am referencing my personal functioning of thought and with each painting all is again questioned, even the size. The shapes are unlike any that exist in the world and they are weightless. This is not to say that the shapes are absolutely unrelated to the history of nonrepresentational painting but that the shapes are different from the physical world of things and objects in very specific ways. At a glance, one sees shape and thinks three-dimensionally (the illusion of three dimensions), but really the paintings are the dissolution of form, dimensionless and freed from obligation and from gravity, as we know it. Some shapes merge with the background giving life to a seemingly unified surface and incorporeal place. In the making, if my mind is unobligated and undistracted, the shapes are light; heavy thoughts equal heavy shapes, and so on. For a shape to be light and balanced there must be a slight hint of the opposite; therefore, the arrangement is a complicated intuitive application that can involve long periods of observation and adjustment to the under-drawing of the shape. Other times I concern myself less with balance and more with the immediacy of applying the shape to the surface, depending on my mood. Heavy pictures are unsuccessful pictures. (There is no such thing as failed paintings, we learn from the bad ones too.) Gravity is an idea that has little to do with my mind and the way I feel, more to do with shackles.

Weightlessness is real, a physical sensation and state of mind guided by inspirations. When I look up to the stars I feel detached, impersonal, irrelevant, and concurrently I shape a bond with all beings and things, a feeling of significance. I just feel and I float. Lightness is an undefined grey area where opposites come together and is specific in this way. This is a feeling that I aspire to in my work but in no way is the work about nature or the landscape or “about” anything at all. Perhaps, it is about Nature with a capital N. Or, if you like, Life with a capital L?

The work is only factual from a standpoint of materials and feeling. Perfection does not exist materially; therefore, the feeling captured within the paintings could never exceed being an approximation. To me, the origin of the world and myself is undefined and exists without a precise beginning, so I could not possibly go on making work that defines itself. Intentions are all that I have and I can only hope to even hint at them within the work. Belief is painting and it is belief in the defined tangible and intangible, materiality evoking emotion.

To me, right and wrong does not exist in the world, only the individual nature of beings and things. One cannot exceed its own nature. All try and all fail. Some give up trying. I believe this to be the nature of personal success. Knowing oneself. I am still seeking answers and if they are to come they come but I am interested in the questions mostly. As a painter there is only one question from which all questions arise, “What is painting to me?” My questions are my paintings and I have not yet found factual answers. Answers are complete, they are fixed, and my work is not completed. Only after intense observation of the paintings themselves do I grasp anything remotely specific, at best elusive, and not even then do I fully understand even the exact meaning of them. They are a mystery to me!

Lightness occurs in three distinct ways between the relationships of shape to the nonrepresentational atmospheres inside the work. (Painted atmospheres not in direct reference to nature or the landscape.) The first distinct way is when a shape appears to float or to be light within the atmosphere yet is clearly contrasted apart from the atmosphere. The second way is when a shape merges with the atmosphere creating an overall place wherein the shape is inseparable from it. And the third way is when the shape borders the atmosphere itself and contains it. The first way presents a weightless shape suspended in levitation and the second way presents a unified state of being light, atmosphere and shape combined. By light and lightness, I am not referring to the state of being light in relation to gravity or to luminosity and darkness, but to the feeling of weightlessness in the mind and metaphysical sensations. An intangible process of gravity. Nor am I referring to lightness as an intellectual concept and idea but as it is felt in the mind and body inspiring an ideal rooted in experience. Utter balance!

I will try to give an example of how the shapes do not exist as three-dimensional, or of the world. Walking down the street we see a dimensionless silhouette of a body or object but our mind tells us this is not so and completes the shape in three-dimensions, imagining someone to be present. In the paintings, a successful shape never appears as an illusion or silhouette of an object with three-dimensions; it exists only as an irregular shape on the canvas and within the mind’s eye. You move into the shapes just as the shapes hold you out, canceling the specific illusion of physical dimensions. The same can be said for the area surrounding the shapes. For one to experience the sensation of moving into the shapes one must also sense the shapes as obstacles



around the edges of the shapes. The mental realization and physical sensation of moving inward cannot occur without the opposite effect, it would seem to me?! Neither moving into the shapes or being held out of the shapes is fully realized by the viewer if we don't consider both sensations. The interchange between these two stable conditions springboards our minds into a realm of experience wherein transcendence is possible. And, once the two ways of looking at the paintings fuse – transcendence occurs!

The shapes assert themselves as impenetrable obstacles once separated from their atmospheres and penetrable obstacles once homogenized with their backgrounds. I would like to refer to the space created by the shapes as Obsticular Space. It is not simply obstructed space because the shapes are also permeable allowing the viewer to seemingly move into, through and around the shapes once homogenized. To fully understand and appreciate the experience and necessity of expanding freely over a plane I had to experience distracted daily life within the obstructed streets of New York and likewise the clarity of harmony with Kansas and Missouri views. Within my paintings I do not attempt to represent natural spatial differences using fixed or defined spatial relationships, but I do present the abstracted physical sensation and feeling one experiences when confronted within an open place and in front of an obstacle.

If a painting quickly and boldly implies a familiar shape or representational figure of any sort, I will attempt to eliminate its associative qualities, at times. To me, this signals tangential intellectual or personified thoughts during the making. Yet, my titles are clues, at times, to what I imagine them to be! The paintings must be agreeable to my mind. Other viewers may recognize parts of a painting that allude to different real objects or things, and this is unavoidable, it is within their minds. I believe that all beings and things are subject to illusionistic representation and metaphorical interpretation regardless of how a thing presents itself; it is in the mind and the eye. Not within absolutely one or the other. Personification of the shapes is likely inevitable, but is secondary, and is a reference to a sequential way of thinking about the paintings. This often occurs only after the painting is initially felt within communication.

The actuality of the paintings themselves, not just the shapes, is neither object nor window; rather, they interact as both. Within duration of concentrated viewing one recognizes the overall flatly painted surfaces and moves into those surfaces. One moves between the physical realities of a painted two-dimensional surface-actuality in the eyes, into the mental realm of immateriality-actuality in the mind. Of course, I am referring to the successful works here—many have fallen short.

Line is occasionally present in my work but it is never foremost. Seldom do I think about line once the painting is done. It is only used to pronounce shape in process at times. Filling a shape solid is one way and filling it with lines is another, and outlining the shapes is yet another way.

Gesture is apparent in some of my brushwork and it is anonymous, repetitive gesture, free-flowing, an all-over application and effect of similar marks. I don't care for the drama of isolated expressive gestures for doubt of an overly explicit mood or exaggerated meaning. I prefer subtleties. Formal elements within the paintings frequently complement each other creating a specific nonobjective experience, in turn, precise communication is freeing the viewer to bring their own subjective intellectual and feeling based responses to them.

My palette is reduced to black, white and grey at this time. Color, and all things seeable and unseeable, tangible and intangible, audible and inaudible, fragrant and odorless can be expressed with black, white and grey, I believe. This is true without using highly chromatic blacks, whites and greys as well. It is within the mind's eyes. This is not to say color is without value to me, just that it is not needed, for now, so I work achromatically.

Between painting and belief, I find no gap. Compassion for people and all things seen and unseen may be the most important human quality. For me, it is the commitment to one's own ideal shared indirectly through action. I would like the paintings to express my deepest compassion. Every piece is an inconclusive result of my experience of living and painting, one not separate from the other. The work is born out of being and exists how it exists, without me. Declaratively, I want the paintings to exist void of acting and free from hiding for all viewers to project their own true feelings and perceptions of self onto them. Honesty is key. For the paintings to propose something and to *tell* nothing, not even with a whisper, is my sincerest hope. May they communicate accurately!

## **A Duty**

The work is out of our hands. It is not ours so long as we are doing our job right. We mold the work, fashion the work, make the work, create above all our job to make the work and the time spent doing so creates us. I love it. This work. The work of the world. One must earn it, the right, the passage. Slowly it comes into being and we like it, our job. It grows on you. There seems to be a mystery at work. It is partly a calling and partly a job that we create. Truly it is a mystery. And we engage with it. We are married to it even.



Inspiration #57, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 72 inches





Inspiration #48: To Begin Again, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 inches





Twonism XIX: Descending Swans, 2016, Oil on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

### **A Message**

You see, the priests and cops are mere decoys to the ground beneath, those pushing them up. And the military unicorns ride for vengeance in the daytime and like bats at night. But somewhere, somehow, they gain their thirst, their love. And we help them without their knowing it. Culture is but an obvious mirage to me. I permeated the dark long ago with my torch, my two eyes, with my fingerprints on the cave walls dipped in my pain to speak. And I wish there was a treaty of love to sign before going away each time into solitude, but the emancipation of light

from your two blue eyes will do. I'll carry it with myself. I once wrote that a single drop of morning light and a man courts hope for seventy nights.

And must we shout so loudly even still? We mustn't.

And it sounds like everything when we shout doesn't it, for everything depends on the solitude of a whisper in this world. A simple whisper. You can't even recognize it can you, or do you? And it does nothing because it has no name. Some call it a collective effort to speak of justice, but, I know better. It exists, this love, but no one has named it yet, or otherwise, it wouldn't be so softly spoken to one another in this world would it. And the artist is but a messenger. The poet, but a light and winged thing, Plato says. And the artist is but a messenger, but a messenger, for you. And love is but a whisper at night.



Twonsim XX: In My Dust (With Respect to Agnes), 2016, Acrylic and Oil on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

### **A Personal Review of the Twin Peaks Premier, 2017**

No whammy on the Twin Peaks, eh? Well, I loved it. The instant beauty and nostalgia of the Chromatics bar scene was dope, the song that ended the second hour of the show with the gorgeous woman singing on stage (a Lynchian trope) was good, but I was a little shocked that David Lynch would use such a featured/known group as he did? I liked that it took me back to the movie, *Drive*, that I loved, which featured a masterful soundtrack, a good nod if we can call it



that, but possibly an unnecessary one. I'm a sucker for the Chromatics' sound and the lead singer's voice. I find it beautiful and seductive in a sexual way, but it lacked the twisted chaos of Lynch's trademark improvisational jazz scenes. Anyhow, it wasn't THAT bad.

The demonic slasher scene with the couple humping on the love seat was a little trite, all I'm saying, but, I loved it, mostly. At least I loved what led up to it. The set in that room was amazing... the cardboard boxes in stacks, the precise and clean symmetrical lines, the emptiness of technology, coupled with the mystery of occult vibes.

But, I can see your point that Lynch dropped the ball, if this is your point: after all these years, he's finally giving the public an acceptable foray of what we'd expect from him, which, is unfortunate. But, I'd like to maintain that it is still quite different from other television shows of recent or later years. It's also unfortunate that the most disturbing movie I've seen in recent years is that David Fincher one about the children's author gone fucking psycho on Ben Affleck's character. A slasher of a nightmare film. I thought that movie was hilariously terrible!

Anyhow, David Cronenberg, if you're still alive (in more ways than one), won't you save the show?

But Lynch, we still love you so I give you an almighty high-five of a performative concept driven show. Lovely.

### **A Pivotal Question to Some: Can Art Save The World?**

*"The art world likes to ask, can art save the world? And everybody wants to say yes. Eh, I disagree. But art does change the world by changing how we see and therefore how we remember."*

—Jerry Saltz, from "New Ways of Seeing" (<http://paidpost.nytimes.com/tiffany/new-ways-of-seeing.html>)

Always, Jerry, throughout the years of my reading his criticism, has maintained a healthy for him irreverence to art. And that's fine. But, his career is built on an unhealthy misunderstanding of art and what the artist must do. The artist, the true artist, is someone who believes in art's ability to save the world. And as a critic of art, one must believe the same, should their life go on to positively affect change in generations of artists and loving members of society to come. Lofty as it may sound?

The true artist gives himself or herself to their art believing deep down that they cannot only affect change, but that altogether, with the culmination of the arts, they can, in effect, redirect the world to a safer, more humane place; thus, overtime, save the world. I venture to say, as an artist who believes in such a thing, that those in other fields also feel this way. That, to make change, one must, at the possible cost of losing their mind, give themselves to a life of passion for their art. To a life of possible suffering and ecstasy. The thing about it is, one must be strong and

disciplined in their pursuit. One must condition themselves in a way to endure the pitfalls and mountaintop views, along life's momentous path.

It is no longer enough to be first. You can't just say what you want at the cost of hurting others. The great actor, Denzel Washington, has stated as much. One must tell the truth. To be the first on the scene, the first to report, the first to get your story out there is not enough. You must tell the truth. And the truth takes time. You must give yourself the needed time to digest what has been experienced and witnessed, in part. Then, tell it, your side, and be honest. The whole point of art, at least part of it, is to slow the mind and senses into believing something real, a truth. And not only to get you to believe it, but to remember it as it happened, and to understand it fully. To witness and experience it thoroughly. And it is not a matter of being persuaded it is a matter of experiencing the reality of a truth and a fact. The artist cuts through to the bone and exposes the truth and fact and paints it out or uses a medium by which to tell the truth about such and such a thing and/or state of being. It is our job and our endeavor to tell the truth. As it should often be for others.

## **A Question About Light**

I would like to tell you about a very fascinating phenomenon that occurred at my last gallery discussion. There were many questions asked about my work, my landscapes, all good questions and interesting to me, but there was one question that stood out the most. And upon my answering it, I lost my audience. It was extremely fascinating to me, and remains so, as to the content of the question of which I would like to address here in further detail. The question went something like this, "Do you show light in your paintings?" And my response was, "The light comes from the reflection of light off of the colored surfaces." And that is why I lost them, of which I will explain why.

You see, light can be discussed, but once it becomes detached, too detached, it doesn't matter to the audience, or so it appeared.

Now, light can be illustrated in a painting of which I don't do in my paintings. Or, one can manifest inner strength, or light, through color selection. This, I do. And essentially, the result of using bold coloration is this, from a scientific standpoint and from a technical standpoint as an artist, I understand that highly saturated color reflects the most optimal amount of light in the room. White, it can be said, reflects the most amount of light in the room.

So all in all, I missed out, in a way, by answering the fantastic question the way I did. What I should have said is that I am not interested in illustrating light, but that I am interested in manifesting color that corresponds with my joy, my spirit, while painting; colors that happen to demonstrate strong emotional correspondences through vibrancy and hue selections. Colors that are bold and bright, colors that come from my soul perhaps, and ones that reflect not only natural light well, but also my inner light, my personality.





Twonism XXI: Modesty, 2016, Acrylic and Oil on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

## A Request

There is a big difference between working aesthetically and from ideas. The art world is consumed with ideas and has been for some time. I remember working aesthetically in school. Not from ideas. Aesthetically, that is, based solely on the look, order, form, and content. Some believe that without ideas you cannot work with content. This is false. Content is always a depiction of one's self in the work, and this content be it abstract or otherwise, is found in the work. Ideas are topical meaning they deal with everyday life and are issue oriented meaning they often are pulled from the news or from issues of identity. This can be taught. Self-content is difficult, it cannot be taught. The personal is where my ideas come from if I have ideas. So, when creating a narrative people want to know about the narrative. This is difficult, naturally. As there is no real precedent existing in the world around us. Only likenesses. It is a harder road. But the personal is realization. Realization that all universal ideas stem from the personal. People these days want to deal with the big picture first, to dance around on the surface of ideas. But they miss the point, it begins with the personal. How we invent new ways of living has always been done this way. So in the realm of art, let us improve upon the personal first, and then we may envision new ways of living on a broader scale. Let us then deal with the universal and political realm. So all in all, I am asking for a return of the self. An improvement on form and content, of self. This will help us to realize our goals first. Recognize what you need and go for it in society. This is how the world works.



Twonism XXII: Wisdom and Innocence, 2016, Acrylic and Oil on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

### **A Roughening**

We are at a time when most things sellable are polished to the inth degree! Galleries want the work that sells, and they make their livings this way. You can't really blame any one thing or person on this. Maybe the pop artists, but that's just my stance. You see, the proliferation of the digital world has removed us so far. Images are glossy, at best. Things roughly hewn are of marginal value, at this time, unless in the right area of thinking. And this is what the world needs more of currently. The slick surfaces will fail under the right light. I mean, they're fine... I think the world needs them at this time to reflect what is wrong with the big picture, to allow one to think of different ways than that in order to evoke real feelings. But, the balance is off. So, I will keep on with them, the roughening of pictures in my way.

### **A Routine: Writing and Painting**

Writing for me is a daily discipline, on most days. I remain open to the time needed for writing on most days. Some days I don't write because I am painting. And vice-versa, it is the same way with painting for me. I remain open to inspiration for paintings. I would lose my mind if I wasn't

open. Pinned in, upset, pissed off, I would be. Angry. So, I await inspiration and I value inspiration when it happens. I go with it.

It helps me to be in the place where I get work done. The studio. And one must live their life. So, there is a back and forth, a give and take to it all. I like to go to the bar. I don't write about it always, but, it's there. I have interactions there. I learn there. Particularly about aggression but I won't go into it now. I teach. I love to teach. Interaction occurs. Tension happens. We must release the tension onto the page and onto the canvas. Or it's purer, like clean beauty, pure beauty. Sometimes, it's difficult to describe, but nature gives back. I don't always draw on relationships with people. It is often a communion with nature that provides inspiration for me as well.

### **Abstraction Exists on the Edge of Perception**

It occurs to me the only abstract form that competes with painting in abstraction is music. Music without words. It's in the high notes and the low notes and in between notes. Those notes that exist at the edge of perception, on the cusp of being nothing. And some will argue that there is no vocal presence there, but, they are wrong. A note lingers. A voice lingers.

A voice is not just a voice but a creation. This is a voice. And that simply is the tangible. What is intangible, the spaces between actual sound or vision, often speak volumes about what is seen and how crude the tangible can be. Silence is everything. You see a completed painting and ask yourself, what's missing? What can you feel but can't see? And that, that miniscule essence, what can't be seen, or explained, but has presence, is what it's about. And then it's gone. Vanished. Right before your own eyes, ears, nose, and heart.

And that, that tiny expression of something so small is the essence. An afterimage that appears in the mind's eye 7 minutes later, after viewing the painting, that causes awareness of these moments and prompts us to feel, be it amazement, or emotions unheralded. That's what it's about! And nothing can be said about it, other than once grasped, it is a piece of us!

### **Advice to a Younger Artist**

You are talented, now, work. Do not sit on your thumbs about it. Discipline has many ways, so see it through! Get help. Ask questions! Respond when talked down to. Let me know when you know already. Do not give up! Fight back. Be strong. Hallelujah!

## **Advice to Young Artists**

First of all, you've got to want it, and want it for real. You've got to walk through the doors. This is real life people and art isn't a money-making game until you get real about it. So, speaking mainly about money here, and practically I hope, let's get real together.

### **#0 The 16 Virtues, by Damon Freed**

Passion (Heartfelt Inspirations)  
Ambition (Desire for the task)  
Motivation (Driven to the task)  
Honesty (Not lying)  
Justice (The weighing of righteousness)  
Truth (Somewhere between fact and fiction; the weighing of dreams and goals)  
Discipline (Adherence to your task)  
Devotion (Responsibility to yourself and to others)  
Trust (Not breaking the love between yourself and others)  
Good Behavior (Temperament)  
Faith (Belief in a Greater Good)  
Good Will (Awareness of Intentions)  
Patience (For the long-term)  
Love (Everlasting)  
Communication (Enduring)  
Hope (To err on the side of positivity!)

### **#1 The Work Must be Made**

—Don't let it fuck you up, not even a little bit! Make Work.

### **#2 The Promotion of the Work is Done by Galleries**

—This is why you deserve a gallery.

### **#3 The Gallery you Deserve is the Gallery you Want for Yourself**

—Look at galleries by going to them. Familiarize yourself with them. Decide which is a good fit for you.

### **#4 This is about Showing in Galleries**

—Yes.

## **#5 There is no other Path in the Artworld Outside of It**

—You want to be relevant, don't you! Fame is this. Cultural significance. Meaningful work is this. But don't make a fuss about this. You already deserve what's coming to you. Some see fame in their lifetime others don't.

## **#6 Rest & Work**

—Take breaks. Do your best with this.

## **#7 Ethical Integrity**

—What can I say here, do your best to stay on the straight path. And help with your gallery is important here. Your gallery should understand you at times. It helps to say this to yourself on occasions!

## **#8 The Work is Done**

Do the work. Barnett Newman said, more or less, what we do as artists is to work on one painting our entire lifetime. So work on that painting. The painting is yours. And the world's, in turn!

## **Agnes Martin and the Grid**

How close was Agnes Martin's work to Gene Davis, or to Piet Mondrian, or to Ad Reinhardt? Yet she waded acclaim. She managed her own path. A building on tradition, no matter how dismissive her aims were of other's art, within her own work she became a part of contemporary dialogue. In large part because of her dismissive views. She was an individual.

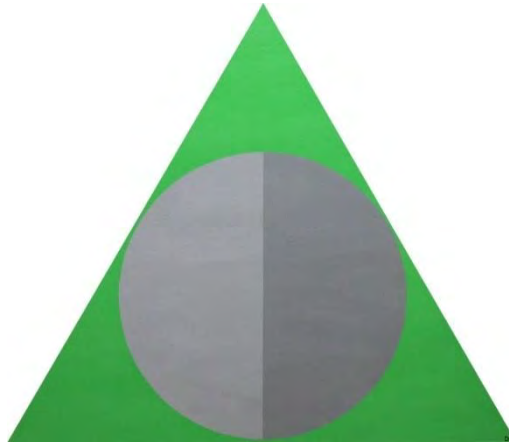
Gene Davis' stripes are perhaps the closest to Martin's in their pastel, at times, coloration. Their exposed pencil lines and bands of pure color.

Or, how close was she to the paired down grids of Piet Mondrian? Very close. After all it was Martin who said her first grid was painted after having her thought about the innocence of trees. Is it any coincidence that Piet Mondrian was the first to paint a series of trees where the tree image was eventually transformed into a white, black, and grey grid? I doubt it.

Or let's take a look at Ad Reinhardt's paintings of grids. How dark was his black series and how white and light were Martin's paintings? See the polarity and connection?

You see people, all these artists together form a tradition, a building on the past. On the shoulders of giants, all of us.

My work is no different. I came to it not on my own, but through tradition, a building on the past. And if you look, my grids are different than anyone's. They are my own.



The Future is Bright, 2017, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 inch Equilateral Triangle

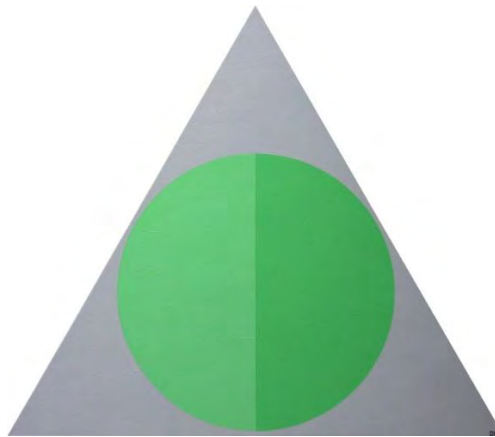
### **An Angel Bestows Mercy**

It is in the infinity of light that I have found space, not in darkness. Darkness persists – yet, in it a falling off of the light. Therefore, your vision becomes clouded by it, by depression! And though my abstractions of thought are dark, I cannot proceed any longer in its direction. One must attain to the light! One must attract visitors to his dominion. To his palace, rather! So, in doing so I reflect on the greatest monuments of art! The glory of statues placed in parks. The single ray of light, as Emerson said long ago, to befall upon those statues is an equivalence of their mercy. Of their perfection! And I think of Rothko and shame. And of Clifford Still, the same. Yet, Martin, Agnes, in all her greyish posing found the light not a single moment too soon. For she breathed into it, into her work, light! And I spent hours, days, months going to museums in New York, only to be garnished in thought. Wagered by it! To set foot into the Metropolitan Museum with all the luminaries of painting. The Hudson River lit up by sunrise. The Japanese, by light! Leaving space to breath in the papers, the scrolls of landscapes of Chinese Men!

So I work to bring the light in on the brink of shadows! I will show you how. In, the darkness is always a moment of serenity that will lead you to it, the light. So go where your hearts reside in the dark. And it is true, that too much is too much, at times. So, be good in it, the dark. Let it console you, to rest your eyes, to convey messages in the dark, of meaning! Let that very darkness soothe the lids to your soul! Be well in them, those eyes that see so well! And soon you may venture for miles into paintings of light. Without a thought given to distraction, to contemplation, to all those opposing forces in this world that do nothing but to throw up obstacles in our way, on our way to the light of the heavens shown down on us, through him, God.

## An Experience unto Itself

All this writing that I do about art – it is important to keep in mind that it is “about” art. It is not “the” art. There is just nothing you can say with the writing that even gets at it, not at the act of painting and not at our responses. Plain and simple. All one can do is hope to talk around it very closely and well. And well, I do believe that it is important, because, perhaps the art exists between the lines of text, and in that part, is where the truth resides. So, overall, the words are there as catalysts, which humorously at times describe very little at face value. Mostly they’re paper tigers with a vastness of substance between.



The Past, 2017, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 inch Equilateral Triangle

## Arrogance and Modesty

*“Modesty in a great mind would, no doubt, be pleasing to the world; but, unluckily, it is a contradictio in adjecto. It would compel a genius to give the thoughts and opinions, nay, even the method and style, of the million preference over his own; to set a higher value upon them; and, wide apart as they are, to bring his views into harmony with theirs, or even suppress them altogether, so as to let the others hold the field. In that case, however, he would either produce nothing at all, or else his achievements would be just upon a level with theirs. Great, genuine and extraordinary work can be done only in so far as its author disregards the method, the thoughts, the opinions of his contemporaries, and quietly works on, in spite of their criticism, on his side despising what they praise. No one becomes great without arrogance of this sort. Should his life and work fall upon a time which cannot recognize and appreciate him, he is at any rate true to himself; like some noble traveler forced to pass the night in a miserable inn; when morning comes, he contentedly goes his way.”*

—Arthur Schopenhauer, from *On Genius*, translated by T. Bailey Saunders

Blatant cockiness is not the answer when attempting to communicate your ideas. Your audience will be lost. Nor will they desire the lesson. Attitude is everything when communicating. It comes in words and through tone, through everything. One tries to align each with her message.

Retreat then to reform your thoughts and communications. Keep trying. The world. The place. The context all plays a part as well. So I say keep going and your message, in part, shall be received, which is better than nothing.

Almost like a tool, arrogance is necessary. It gets the others to stand up. To face adversity. To confront other, newer ideas. In communication, arrogance is applauded at times. But, in communication, modesty is rarely applauded. There is a time for each.

Now, modesty looks good on you once you have been arrogant. One needs to realize when arrogance has run its course.

Modesty is not meek. It is firm and solid. Modesty.

**Art** – August 22, 2018

Art shrugs lightly at the thought of force of religion. At the exhaustion of it. And uses it for its own.

**Transcendental** – August 22, 2018

It's just beyond grasping it fully, the Meta. Ethereal is the word to describe beyond.

**Art**

Throughout time the artist has been thought of as that mischievous character perhaps living self-righteously in the shadows, within the nooks and crannies of the world misbehaving when he wants to, perhaps not taken as seriously as he should be, promiscuously loathing life and others, emerging to care for the world only on his or her whim.

Well, I hope that it is clear by now that this is not the case of truth, but a very subjective view that does not hold true, not by today's standards and not by the past's. The artist's duty is one of clarity. Clarity of vision, of voice, of song, of movement, of art. Because this view of the world's is skewed, I go on trying to change the views of the world's. How many times have you heard it said the artist the coward, the artist the nervous wreck, the artist lacking confidence, the artist all-mighty-superior in jest? Many times, I have. Yet, who is devoted to the improvement of the human race more than the artist is, very few? Who sustains clear vision throughout a lifetime



better than the artist? There is no one individual in this world devoted to the human race more so than the artist.

The artist cares more for his art than those individuals who work every day at nothing. At an empty result. The artist creates. He does not only do, but he creates something. Every day he creates something for the world to view, read, to hear, to taste, touch, and to smell! Yet, the doubt of individuals who are scarred by it, by the not doing, are the ones losing. And it is unfortunate, indeed.

## **Art and Technology**

All this about we are no different than those who painted in the caves, well, yes, we are still the same, but we are, because of that reason in advance of technology. Artists are. Our thought moves quicker and faster than theirs, other people's. I remember having this discussion in college. Speed is a very important aspect of art making, and the slowing down also is. There is technology that exists because of art, customized after ideas found in artwork, inspirations realized in art. The inspiration comes from inside of us, artists, inside of the world. Our ideas precede realized technology, and, are technology. Because we work *with* nature, our ideas travel faster than other's ideas, nature is found in the work; the artwork. Ideas and inspirations travel *through* nature.

## **Art vs. Narration**

The artist sets an open stage for a story to be told. The illustrator tells the whole story! Poetry functions the first way. A novel, the second way! Therefore, the painting and poem require work on the part of the viewers and/or readers. The work is done for them in case of an illustration and the novel.

When paintings and poems are great, there are only lazy viewers and readers of them. When paintings and poems succeed, the world is changed by them.

## **Art Fairs and the Gallery Experience**

Admittedly, I am not a businessman, I am an artist. After reading an article about a shift in focus from galleries to art fairs, where some big-name art galleries are closing their doors to focus on art fairs more, it alarms me. Art fairs are zoos, in a negative sense. The artwork hangs in tiny makeshift spaces, and collides, one piece after another, into the next space, as do the onlookers who seek the glitz and the glamour. They're one-offs.

In a good way, the art fairs can expose art, unseen art, to new audiences. But the artwork is not viewed well. Having been to several, I know. It's a good way for visitors to a city to get a positive and speedy overview of work that exists in major galleries, but, as far as exposure goes, it's not all good. The work isn't seen in the context of an exhibition. The experience mutes the voice of the work.

It's like when a museum that is overly designed takes away from the experience of a retrospective exhibition of an artist, like the Guggenheim, for example. I remember few shows of merit there, but, I do remember the stunning building, well. The art fairs function, in a sense, this way. They are a spectacle. You come away from them remembering the year you went to that one exciting Armory show, or that one Art Basel show, but you remember little of the artwork viewed.

If you're wanting a memorable experience of artwork itself, art fairs are not for you. If you're going there to buy they're not for you either, I don't think. I must question those who purchase artwork from an art fair. At least I question those who are purchasing for the first time an artist whose work is unfamiliar to them. It's not a place like a gallery where you can contemplate, sit with, stand with, and communicate with the art. An art fair just isn't a productive environment to view serious work in. The fairs are speedy, packed, and stupid, but entertaining and fun. Artwork, as always, is capable of so much including that of entertainment and fun but there is so much more reward to meaningful work than this. If you seek depth in work, the fairs are not where you should go looking for it, I don't think.

## **Artists**

You know, some believe artists are self-involved and it's true but we are no more self-involved than we should be, no more than we are not ourselves. We are channels, voices, muses; we adapt to our surroundings and are on the move . . . to somewhere else, to some other thought, to some other person, to some other vehicle of change. We exchange ideas and are holy, above ground, walking with others; "we are priests," as Brice Marden put it so well – in a metaphorical sense of things. We are scientists, philosophers, doctors, we are chefs, we are everything it takes to be an artist, we wear many hats. But we become someone else for not too long if we are lucky. We bounce off of ideas and receive ideas. We encompass them, other's ideas, and we are influenced when thought resonates. We do our best to filter the thought into something great, into an erudition of light, into something of ourselves and of the world. We bring things to light for others to see. We show them how to be. Yet we ourselves are not always the essence of a single piece, but of an amalgam of pieces, a unity of work and life. We identify with our duty which is painting for me, but not for so long. We identify with life as well, which is not separate, but the same. Art is life and life is art! It takes both attitudes. As an artist, it's just life.

## **Artists of Styles**

In this world you have to be brave enough to contradict yourself. You will do it over and over and over again. You will change again and again and each time you will think to yourself, "This time I will get it right. This is the time I stay on track, the same track." With painting I have thought this many times and then I change. I think to myself, "This series should last me until I die. I'll just change a little this way and a little that way but maintain my overall appearance." In the end, it's just nonsense thinking this way. You have to go where the inspiration takes you, where the honesty is, where the discoveries are, where the freedom is.

## **Artmaking and Making Money**

As luxurious as it would be to be able to work at my art alone every day in the studio, to be a fulltime studio artist, I must speak on behalf of those who do not, as I work to get paid at teaching the arts which I also love to do. Having a job that pays that is separate from my studio discipline is a different kind of strategy. You see, when working at your art alone, there must be greater pressure to provide for yourself with your artmaking. By working at something else in addition to your discipline of artmaking the pressure is lessened. Personal sacrifices in the work to make sure it sells are unacceptable to myself. It's a good thing keeping the income and the art separate, and if an exhibition goes well money wise then good.

## **As a Painter**

The world is too chaotic these days to not bring some balance to the equation! The artist, in today's world, it seems to me, must bring equilibrium into the arts. Now, some do this singlehandedly, and other's, like myself, ambidextrously! Meaning, you can't go on as an artist just making the same things as you did before. Change must occur. You do this, by looking, exteriorly. You look to other artists, you look to the world for this! By some inner approximation after you have become inspired, you do a thing! And you paint beautifully what has been digested in solitude! What you see goes in, and what you think goes out won't be what you've seen, but what has lingered within, been thought about, cascaded upon the soul as a washboard, at what time you then must paint it out of you! You don't sit around effortlessly, you see, you are looking, thinking, and feeling... one in the same... at all times. But you must get to work!

## **Authenticity and Originality**

Some would have it that nothing in this world is authentic or original and perhaps it's true. And as easy as this is to accept for some, I have a hard time with it. If for the simple fact that it's important to believe that hard work can lead to real surprises, to something original. And maybe

it happens in a matter of degrees, originality? Or maybe it happens spontaneously and without precedent? I don't know, but for one, I must believe it is possible. It drives me. Personally, I feel that most serious artists, if you are to consider their entire way of doing things and personal oeuvre, you will find that it is original. Not even when someone attempts to mimic another person's work or another thing's output is there exactitude. No two works are the same, no two people, and even no two objects intended to be replications of each other can be exact in the world. If one looks closely.

## **Balance, 2006**

My concern is one of content, not of aesthetics, not of painting, and not of poetry alone. We are more than bodies, just as all beings and things are more than surface appearances. When I paint and write I do so not to achieve a look, but to *recognize* myself as a person, like all persons; a human-being rich with feeling whose mind and expression extends beyond topical ideas and beyond myself. My trust is in the receiver to *experience* the content of my work, not to understand it wholly and factually. I believe we all experience the meaning of life and art, the same; the difference is our interpretations. Hence, the appearance of difference between my paintings and writing is entirely superficial. The function of content, is the same! I present to you, a singular expression:

## **A Questioning Life**

The painter accepts blindness  
To feel what is with him, not  
In front of him. Without a look  
To guide him discoveries are  
Made possible. All that he sees  
Are the inner workings of his  
Mind, revealed one by one  
In time—with each painting  
A find, each piece left behind.

Answers are unacceptable to  
Living artists. Questions  
Are unacceptable to the dead,  
For inquisition slows the stead  
Of a dying man.

I find it impossible to differentiate between art and life, most of the time. My father is a professional painter, and my mother taught primary education in schools. She cultivated highly hands-on and creative classrooms. My father is that rare and, special, type of artist always interested in other's art and our family life. Both of my parent's interests carried over into family

life to a large extent informing my sensibilities, early on! Home was like living in a small museum with curators for parents, corridors and passageways were filled with art. Because of my exposure to art from within this environment, the thought of painting as a job occurred to me early on, at a young age. Painting has remained rather a way of life from early childhood onward. So, to those artists and non-artists of the past and present (i.e.-Minimalists, Process Artists, and Objectivists...) who have stated before that painting should not involve personal emotion or whom purge emotion from their work, I must disagree. Raised in a home where walls were filled with paintings and flat surfaces with emotive sculptures I could not help but to feel due to their innate qualities of form. It was clear to me at a very young age that I was going to paint and art is the highest on the shelf. As it holds strong emotional roots for me still, that are unabashedly and unavoidably present and personal. Though I do not paint “about” emotion, it is in my work.

### **Emotion And Painting**

my emotions are with me now  
in time i've taught them how  
how to stay by my side  
from them i no longer hide  
i like to watch them as they slide  
to use them as my guides

Recently, I've been thinking of the experience of balance in painting and in life, well, I often think of it with regard to life as a totality! I often find myself and have found friends in former years using the word balance to describe a condition of life we all would like to build and maintain. In my mind, other words spring forth such as *comfort* and *happiness*, as well. What these words have in common is the representation of states of being that happen to us without notice in life and indicate some sort of emotional contentment! We scramble around confused and scattered doing this and that, perfecting and organizing all things meaningful and ridiculous in our lives in hope of ending up within some glorious balanced state of easy thinking and clear direction when all of the sudden, without warning, we happen upon a fleeting moment of utter fulfillment!

### **Metaphysical Poem – To Emily Dickenson**

Harldy amused, not sure what to draw  
Sat confused, so I drew what I saw  
In this I found my start—  
Twenty-Six years to find my heart!  
Two parts lament, two parts the lark—  
No longer a “look” to guide my art!

These moments are often so miniscule that all we know of time by way of clocks and stopwatches wouldn't have a prayer in recording their elapse. Regardless, seconds and minutes don't enter into this kind of experience.

### **Without Walking I Go Everywhere (Studio Time)**

O, the moments when I am at home  
Every sound and sight in focus, every tone  
These sacred moments are simply my own  
O, how I travel distances sitting alone

These moments are not learned and don't involve the intellect but exist as emotional responses to life without definitive reason. They are personal experiences in time that we are briefly conscious of and sustain us within our subconscious for longer periods, until our next inspiration. Barnett Newman spoke similarly when he insisted on his physical sensory experiences in time; except they are more than that, as he alluded to in his own work. They affect the mind and senses informing all emotional and intellectual aspects of conscious reality.

### **The Physical Sensation Of Time —To Barnett Newman**

All I do with my days is draw lines  
Not really knowing where they'll end up  
May seem silly, but it's what I know of time

What I'm extending to you here has forever been humanly understood and penetrates all people of the present, never-mind class and race or whatever variety of mental disorders and physical ailments one could think or have, in my opinion. Is not every person as mentally stimulated and handicapped as the next within the mind?

### **The Only *About* In Art**

*Art is about freedom!*  
He is irresponsible  
Unobligated kingdoms  
Without council

These essential moments embed deep within our mindful trenches and act to shape enlightenment. Unlike worldly issues and ideas, experiences such as these stemming from artworks don't fall from fashion. Or, at least they shouldn't!

### *Acceptance*

The way we paint  
The way we write  
No such wrongs  
No such rights

The way we see  
The way we be  
Tells tomorrow  
Of *Eternity*!

Major philosophies ancient as Lao Tzu, current as Slavoj Zizek or Dan Marshall, have contemplated their impact on man. This is what I paint about! Not about philosophy, but about all of those indiscernible moments that refute fact based knowledge in life. If I have learned anything in life from every painting and experience, theory and book, poem or philosophy or instructor it is this:

My duty as an artist and painter is to simplify the disharmony of life into my tiny expression by way of brushwork and taped off shape into something inspired so that one can rest with joy upon viewing it!

### **The Timeless Massacre of Intuition**

The heart must be a quiet thing—  
Today it goes unheard.  
Perhaps it is that deathly scream—  
Dulling its loudest word.

Logic is cutting the infants—  
To hear heart's throaty end!  
Reason is sipping their innocence—  
Heart's notes now seldom bend!

### **Clarity Takes Time**

What of certainty but of choice

A momentary exaltation of clear voice!  
The tiniest internal exclamation  
Of the largest expression of patience!

My most effortless paintings capture a bit of joyful balance! I cannot explain the exact arrangements that cause this feeling, only that it is elusive and not to be described but *witnessed*. Neither symmetry nor any formal analyses or prescription contains it, for the cues are constantly shifting within our mind and senses while making and viewing. Balance is not an aesthetic concern or act, merely! It is not a mathematics or science of composition and color. It is not a philosophic or paradigmatic exercise of logic and reasoned thought, either.

### **To A Fellow Student Who Claimed I Believe Too Much**

*Who* I ask wears the cynical mask?

*Is it you* making art with a map and a chart?  
*Is it you* so crass exchanging depth of feeling for laughs?  
*Is it you* calculating starts with that number numbed heart?  
*Is it you* afraid to ask and in experience the one who lacks?

*Is it you* the boy who copes with half-truths and lost hopes?  
*Is it you* the girl scared to feel what her mind cannot heal?  
*Is it you* liking others to choke on your sarcastic jokes?  
*Is it you* stripped of zeal eating the apathetic meal?

Fear you me—My O! My O! My O!  
No longer can you hide behind invisible eyes!  
For time ago—Was I! Was I! Was I!

Balance is a momentary state of being that successful artworks barely hint toward. We stand before these works in awe and are pleased by an absolute contradiction between the paintings and our incapacity to sustain balanced life moments. Perhaps this is *beauty*?

### **Art Is With Tradition**

There are moments walls in my periphery broaden—  
Walls before me turn to one and fall away—  
My mind binds other minds in other times and days—  
It is in these moments I know what to say—  
It is in *this* moment—In *this* way!



I hesitate to include an all-mighty grocery list of names and easy quotations in fear of sounding overly ‘academic’ but I assure you that I’ve been sincere and inspired by each due to their genuinely anti-academic expressions. Of course, all great art leads away from academia! I want to make it clear that my intention is not to validate my own efforts, but to further express the likenesses that continue to inform my painting. I hope you will find certain continuity indicative of belief among my selection.

I agreed with Kasimir Malevich when he wrote, “...true value of a work of art resides solely in the feeling expressed.” I agree with Barnett Newman when he discouraged beauty as technical refinement and wrote, “...the manipulation of good color, pure shapes, good composition can only affect the sensuous nature of man.”

### **I’m listening Agnes Martin**

What is duty?  
What is justice?  
What is discipline?

Should not these be “things” in life?  
Instead, it’s towards objects with strife!  
Consumed by appearances this life!  
Forgetting are we—  
Of beauty, beyond, “This Life!”

Agnes Martin was right when she too spoke of beauty, “It is not in the eye it is in the mind.” Robert Mangold when he wrote, “The subject of meaning or content...causes me to try to talk about how I work without talking about formal structure or painterly method.”

With Friedrich Nietzsche when he revealed in words, “The minds of others I know well; but who I am I cannot tell: My eye is much too close to me.” With Plato when he uttered of poets, “...there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him.” And with Lao Tzu when he scripted, “Empty yourself of everything. Let the mind become still.” And with Pythagoras, when he wrote down in times past, “Go not beyond the balance.”

### **There Is Only One Reality, And It Exists Within The Mind**

I uphold the idealist!  
For subjectivity is the realest—  
Fantasy guides the materialist—  
Objectivity, a meaningless task—  
Why purge one’s *self* I ask?  
I refuse the formalist mask!

## **The Artist's Nature Is Unchanging**

Isolation is the fruit of creativity!  
It is also the hammering blunt of one's soul  
To regain the needle edge—our citrus goal  
EXILE—the razor—our acidic proclivity!

Free will—confined to individual nature  
Within myself lie every man and his sanity  
To confuse I with you—my hand false in vanity  
I am the flag that extinguishes nomenclature!

When I get to work, ideas and the busy mind bleed from my conscious and drip to the floor like paint before entering the door to my studio, including these words I am writing now. My worldly worries wane without water, my personal goals grow gaunt because I choose to leave them unfed. For the canvas won't drink until my mind is starved of concern. What is with me and what works on my subconscious, what I eat while I paint, are all the wonderfully mysterious paintings I've ever seen, set eyes and thoughts on from every museum and gallery and home I've entered, every poem, word, or partial glance of nature's glory. So I would like not to expand for once on the many ways I make a mark with paint or pencil, because although I do enjoy the making of a painting and poem I could not possibly capture in words every movement, mark, or word; nor could I elaborate on each tool used, nor would it be meaningful to try! Paintings exist for this. The paintings represent my effort and attempt at meaning ten-fold upon responsibilities.

## **One Law Governs The Artist—Himself**

The honest artist knows himself—*not rules*  
It's surface appearance that fools!  
The *look* of the material world changes  
Hearts and minds—forever sameness!

My art is the heart and mind reflected  
For this—the *same* I have accepted!  
So if my plot and look never changes  
For this—know that I am shameless!

It is my intent here to distance my work from those often told words used to categorize and define so-called abstract, non-representational, or nonobjective painters; words such as—FORMALIST! MATERIALIST! I want to free my paintings from the burdensome academic direction toward surface thinking and skillful technique these words imply. I have already been part of too many streamlined critiques wrought with technical exasperations on the many ways to 'make' a painting that for fresh breath it needs to be stated how awfully non-meandering, un-life-like, anti-personal, inspiration-less, excessively structured, institutionalized, overly negative and self-defeating these

paradigm prancing directives to painting have been. Not to mention the lot of the current gallery world plagued by insensitive and more or less insincere methodologies. The young-artist-gone-frat-kid-commodity-driven-not-sure-who-I-am-or-what-my-true-needs-and-wants-are-but-knows-what-looks-good-to-the-masses-snowball effect! The individual in art takes priority over the social, inside and outside academia. The single-minded man and woman develop what *will become the social*. Change begins with the one person with the one mind with the one realized nature. This has not changed. No matter the many faces our expression takes.

As a painter there is one question from which all questions come, “What is painting, to me?” Painting is the equivalent of personal belief and remains of utmost significance in the development of self. My questions are my paintings and I have not yet found definitive answers. This is precisely what my paintings represent to this day, the possibility for balance in a life without answers. Answers are complete. My work is not finished.

## Two Kinds Of Artists

*Nature*—as it is “seen” in the landscape

*Nature*—as it is understood in the mind

The first—when I was blind!

The second—now of my kind!

As important as it was to the primitives, to ancient eastern art, to Malevich in 1913 and to Newman nearly forty years later, it needs to be expressed again that the artist does more than to create appearances. He is more than a mere reflection of his environment and the glossy world of objects; that same objective world that has had its stranglehold on Art for sixty years since Abstract Expressionism, starting with Minimalism and Pop Art. Human beings carry on the capacity to bring new forms guided by personal content into the world. The same can be said now just as Alfred Barr responded to the Russian Pushkin Museum director A. Zamoshkin in 1915. After Barr’s slide lecture in Moscow in conjunction with the exhibition American Painting and Sculpture Zamoshkin said, “It has transcribed a full circle. More than thirty years ago the Russian artist Malevich painted a famous black square. Now abstractionists, after two generations, have not advanced beyond that point.” Barr responded wisely in conclusion: “Sometimes it is said that art travels in a circle, but every generation must paint its own way. It is not satisfied with the black square which Malevich did. Each generation must paint its own black square.”

## Newness

All that will ever be new was old,  
For the luster of gold would never  
Seem bold if it were not mined  
From the folds of past days,  
Everything the same in time,  
All that is dirty will be shined.



Freedom Cage, 2006, Acrylic and Flashe on canvas, 72 x 72 inches

### **Balance and Unity**

Artwork, the whole enchilada, the whole enterprise is a unity, a working apart but together I feel. There are competitors who feel differently, I'm sure of it, but, I like to believe that together we are building the civilization. Art is not something you find, it's made, brought into being, created out of something even if that something is silence. We as a people, as artists, are collaborating to offer uniqueness to the world as inherently contradictory as this may sound. Yes, we isolate ourselves within the boundaries of our studios, but thought is pervasive to the lone individual.

No matter the walls between you and I we are as if a vast colony, even if only in mind. One artist searches the internet for African masks, another goes to the museum and pulls from Asian handscrolls, and another from somewhere else. The boundaries, the walls that prevent you and I from becoming one are limited in this way. Physically, we are separated but mentally we are united. The balance is critical. And balance is indicative to artmaking no matter the subject. A balancing of influences, a balancing of formal elements, a balancing of subject matter, a balance in art and life. It's all about balance. It is good to stand out amongst the crowd. But there will be times when your investigation of form corresponds with others. We learn from others. This is a good thing. Eventually, we digest what has been learned, incorporate it, and become "ourselves" once again. This dynamic ebb and flow happens off and on again throughout a lifetime of making things. Sometimes we are very close to our contemporaries and at other times quite distant.



Twonism XXXII: The Frame, 2017, Oil on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches

## **Behavior and Color**

Stanley Whitney says, “You don’t want color to behave.” He says people sometimes ask him, “Do you have theories of color?” “I have no theories of color,” Whitney says. Yet he goes on to praise a Mark Rothko show this past fall where he says, “The work wouldn’t let them (the viewers) even say a word.” And finally, Whitney says, “That’s what I want.”

My reason for explicating now is to mostly understand. As a painter whose work I respect, I can sympathize with Whitney’s thoughts on color. I agree with him that you must let the painting live, this is to say that at times we must follow the work where it takes us without putting restrictions on the color. The color speaks to us, that’s what I mean by “you must let the painting live.” So, in this sense, we listen to the color as we put it down and it takes us where it wants to go, misbehaving all the while, or behaving, or whatever.

I find it curious that Whitney, on the other hand, wants the viewers to be silenced in front of his work. That, to me, is the ultimate expression of behavior. I mean, he’s being sincere when he says he has no theory of color, but, he does have a clue about what the paintings should do to the viewer. I find that very curious.

So if he doesn’t want the color in his work to behave, it seems to me that he has high expectations.

Hell, I don’t really care anymore. I just need them to talk. To listen. And to enjoy themselves – my viewers. But I will say that I have seven brand new theories of color and paintings where the color behaves and paintings where the color doesn’t behave. The paintings, where the color behaves, are paramount to my learning and to others’ learning I hope. I also have paintings where the color behaves in different ways which appears radical at times.

## **Behavior and Painting**

“We do not rise to the level of our goals, we fall to the level of our systems.”

—James Clear

I will explain the truth of this quote explicitly... I have created my own systems of color, been locked into them for years now. Contrary to true innovation in abstraction on other fronts. The difference in solitary experience is this: The color systems are my own creations, yes, but have given way to more traditional forms of expression such as color wheels (systematic thinking), whereas, my nonobjective abstractions serve innovative techniques (intuitive reasoning), which is my belief in the heart of moving forward among the rest of those practitioners held down by their pasts. Yet, the innovation of the color wheels is subliminal, written off as simply another color wheel in its traditional mode of thinking! They behave, mostly. But sometimes I feel like work that misbehaves – so to speak – is better! We tread against our past.

## Beliefs

“Everyone needs an ironclad shit detector.”

From Charles Arnoldi’s documentary, True Believer

Nothing perturbs me more than a nihilistic stance on life. That is, nothing has meaning. Are you the victim? Or, are you going to be in the driver’s seat with a more optimistic view on life? Because I’ve been around these types of people, and they are ultimately, negative. Nothing is good enough, very little satisfies them except deliberate art! When challenged with what to believe, they crawl back to their hole without the strength, I suppose, to step up to the bat with their heart on display! They are ultimately, shut in. Unable, out of confusion and laziness— the burden of exhaustion or not enough strife— to challenge themselves or others through remaining vulnerable when it counts the most!

I was once faced with a statement: “Damon, not everything has to mean something.” Now I turn to look at it another way. Yes, it does, in my life. And who were you to make a statement like that to me? I ask?

To drag me down another rabbit hole of meaninglessness! To question my innocence? Which, of course, is bad behavior.  
So, I leave these people to their devices— as I always have.  
Except once, confronted through conflicting views, challenged by it— meaninglessness. Then, I fought! Once I was backed into a corner by a professor and three other classmates.

Hope. These bastards are out of Hope! So, let them be! It is dangerous to confront them.

The only way I can negotiate them in my mind is this: Through science. Positive and negative forces. So, all my life I have ignored them entirely. As I don’t believe, in them.

Beauty has meaning. Everyday has meaning! Thoughts, have meaning!  
All the while, these people exist.

So they may progress through experiencing moments of happiness.



## **Belief and Need**

It does not amuse me to be considered lesser for not believing in war by some but of course it happens, it's not a popular stance. Nor am I amused when I read or hear banter on Facebook or otherwise from people whom are using abusive name calling such as faggot and feminist and pussies and sheep or worse to describe others' beliefs. It is, in my own opinion, a machismo attitude magnified by individuals underneath Trump's presidency to a large extent. Trump's ignorance, individually, morally, and socially, is belittling both men and women and bringing out those who daily devolve into such crude sentiments. And you may be thinking, oh, this is just the same ol' Democratic rhetoric we've been hearing since before Trump was even elected, but hear me out – to be clear, I would like to say that beliefs are different than what may and may not be deemed necessary for the world at this moment by the law. In my book, war is not necessary. Nor do I believe in it, but for the sake of argument, to not believe in it does not mean to not necessarily need it.

For example, I believe we will move forward eventually toward a freer world, one that does not deem physical fighting justified in the future. And nor will its punishment be met with fighting. In the very distant future, it would seem, but in the future nevertheless. This does not mean that it isn't necessary at the moment, war. Although, for change to take place you cannot do what you don't believe in, therefore it is necessary for some of us to not believe in war and fighting and attacking. Which brings me to my final point. I may not believe in it, fighting or war, but was I attacked I would fight at this time out of self-defense. Even though it would be my battle and no one else's. So, when one goes to war due to kindred views or even out of love, just to fight, it is ignorant in my opinion. And it would be ignorant to think this does not still go on. Particularly on Facebook. Some people just want to fight and have little care of who it harms or of any consequences personal or otherwise. Some people, a lot of people, just want to be right. What a weak way to go.

## **Break the Rules**

You know, I recall a time in graduate school after having fought so hard for what felt like so long. A girl and I were talking to one another about art just outside our studios. I was frustrated about a class I was in. Lisa Davis was the instructor and she opened every critique by requesting explanations from her students about their work. I remember disagreeing with her technique. As I explained, art doesn't need a reason for being made, that every decision, and there are many, doesn't have to have a reason for being made in an artwork. This young girl disagreed, my classmate disagreed, and it was great but sad to me. She was simply indoctrinated. There was hesitation in her answer and a frustration. And I remember smiling on the inside and thinking to myself after our conversation, boy, she's going to have a very long and tiresome life making art that way. And to think, here I am, twelve years afterword, with the same realization, the same existence, and the same attitude. You just can't say anything to some people to convince them otherwise. Art doesn't have to be some game. Break the rules people. Make your art and don't think you have to explain it to anyone. Just go on making your art. And trust me, I have as many

reasons for doing what I do and for making the decisions I make as anyone. What I'm saying is, there is rational work and there isn't. The best work, the work of ours, needs no explanation. Pure emotion. Just let it exist.

### **Caesura Review: Four Exhibitions at Bruno David Gallery – A Response to Them**

“Oh, this city's changed so much since I was a little child, pray to God I won't live to see the death of everything that's wild. (Woo!)”

—Arcade Fire

When I read this review, I was drunk, for the first time in 3 months. But, I knew better... so I waited a while before reading the review, at least until I could get alone and by myself, in my freedom cage, to peruse its pages of love. And “bottomless experimentation” in my sense of being isn't experimentation, but expression, and to be sure... there is a vast difference! When it is you, alone, in the studio making artwork you go forward alone, changing pace, changing styles, adhering to yourself the entire time. It's a voice. And that voice, does not change!

The writer mentions a conceptual apparatus in a general statement about how artwork comes into being, combined with its formal execution... and again, on this note I must correct his vision of what art is, to me! To refer to the framework of a painting as a conceptual apparatus is to have already lost the plot. Because there is no plot, it's doing that is the answer. The heart. My friends. Is what it's about! You're just working along, and one day something comes into your mind – a start! And it's not a break with other objects you've created or worked on or over before. It's connected, you see. So, this idea of preliminary thought or concepts, in my work is bullshit, to me. Therefore, intuition plays the largest role of life. Not some nefarious idea of planning, scheming, or charting what's to be, and certainly not in the works I had on display of mine!

And one final thought... the author states, “The combined effect of these complementary failures was that much of the work at Bruno David had a character of stiff *experimentalism*: an approach to making things look wild or feel prickly for the seemingly unsupported sake of making things look wild or feel prickly.” And well, sounds like innocence on display, to me! So, when you leave out an entire artist's work that was on display in the shows, and entirely trash another's work, you tread very lightly, my friends. Lightly.

### **Cave Dwelling**

If you want to be an artist there is one thing you must master for sure, and that is plummeting. This is the easy part. You can dive into euphoric creativity for limitless days on end, though there will come a time to resurface, and this is the difficult part. At some point you will have to face social interaction and norm. This is about not forgetting those who helped you to go

spelunking in the first place, those who equipped you for your journey into the depths of heart and mind, and not to forget the inspirational summer cicadas and grasshoppers. They were by your side all along, and cats and dogs, the rain and sun, and your best mate. It is dangerous, treacherous, and painful, but worth it. It's a bit like cave dwelling probably always was.

## **Censorship and the Progression of Ideals**

It's funny, people don't know what they want. What they want is me, caught in the middle, with a dampened voice, preaching to the choirs, not making disturbances, helping where I can and bowing softly when I cannot. People. And for what?

No noise too loud, no compensation too proud, no amnesty to surround, and no happiness to be found. Well, I find my happiness, I'll promise you that. With or without *them*. With *them* trusting my expression or not.

Innocence, it comes, and it goes. With you there in your humble abodes, and with me here in my studio! And elevated are some things to the realms of art, and others to the picnics in the park, and some others to the value of jest, and others even still to something less. And to those things that still are doing damage in this world, symbols with attitudes of history attached to them, it is our job as artists to decide what happens to them in part. How should we treat them with our materials? I say elevate the broken ones to be cleansed by the light of the world. Without oppression of the symbols, I say elevate these symbols before the public to do some good. Display them in an even light beside other enlightened works to rectify their power as proponents and possibilities of beauty. Censorship is not good.

## **Change is Good**

*"You do not want to fuck up somebody's day on their way to work. What the purpose of you doing your work is to fuck up their whole life."*

—Lawrence Weiner, from *Creators Shorties, Art Should Fuck Up Your Life: The Zen of Lawrence Weiner*, [https://video.vice.com/en\\_us/video/art-should-fuck-up-your-life-the-zen-of-lawrence-weiner/58f53c132574666019e2c21b](https://video.vice.com/en_us/video/art-should-fuck-up-your-life-the-zen-of-lawrence-weiner/58f53c132574666019e2c21b)

Out of context this quote may seem a bit harsh, but what I take from it is positive. With art, you want others to question, and not only do you want them to question their day, but, you want them to question their entire being, way of living, and the very bedrock on which they stand.

I suppose that, in a sense, this elevates the stature of artists to a higher plain of existence, or something like that, but, so long as the statement, the artwork, the novel – is humbling, one may succeed at fucking up somebody's entire life. And this is a good thing, so long as it's an improvement on their way of life. A way that provides strength to others and to themselves.

But also, I see this statement in another way. A way that trashes the crummy one-liner in art. The one-offs, the popcorn-hits, the spectacles, the shock-value of crummy jokes. So, in this way, I like the quote tremendously. Art is slow to take hold and should be that way. It doesn't knock you over the head, but if it does, again, it shouldn't just knock you down or out, it should kill your habitual routine and attitude on life. It should, in other words, change your life.

## **Clash of a Titan**

Once I reached school at Hunter College for my M.F.A., the big buzzword on everyone's lips was "play." To my knowledge, it had been floating around the scene for a while already, but it had reached its pinnacle in the year I entered in 2003 and maintained a stronghold in the work ethics of students at Hunter at least until my departure from there. I can't say I was that involved in the ethic of play in or around my studio. I worked alone, and seriously. And not seriously with play, or at play. I abandoned most notions of it for a devoted practice, my intent, to discover something groundbreaking. Not to "follow," anybody else in what they were doing or in an ethical way as it was all so hilariously lackluster and frivolous to me, the work produced in that way you might say. Now, you could say I lacked the passion to socialize with others, which I didn't, but if one were to take up this aim with me they would be missing the essence of what I was doing there. My history and understanding of an artist as a young college student through the lens of my dad's studio was that it is work. And I made it my promise to do so at it, my dedication to them, is the work, and also my dedication is to the world. I paint and write now. So, you go ahead and play all day in your studios, while I am at work in the day and at night slaving away at this thing called art. And, I recall once having a crit of my work in a painting class at Hunter College where I was at odds with what turned out to be the vast majority of the class. I was told my work was too subtle, too sophisticated in an unhealthy tone. He had me backed into a corner, my instructor did by a student who was dearly admired within the program, and that is when I told her she made work for the scene, and she cried. From that point on I dreaded going to that class, but I had to. And what I've learned as an artist in this world is to disregard such types of critiques. They are meaningless unless you are that way yourself, hardened that is. You see, the world will throw its punches your way directly, regardless. So, it is best to simply step out of the way when one lands in your face. I reacted with a fierceness and that is how they knew me from that point on... quiet, until the lightning comes. So, stand your ground until the lesson is learned the hard way. I'm cowed by now, unless of course, the lightning strikes again sometime. I avoid society when I'm alone and then I get to work, that's how. It's my job. It's my ethic. It's my dedication. And it's my devotion to this world.



Twonism XXXVIII: With a Light On (Totem), 2017, Acrylic and Oil on Canvas, 108 x 36 inches

## **Classicist Romanticist**

I'm torn. On some days I nearly feel as though I was born with an Asian mindset, love for mainly China's old style of thought. Taoism and Buddhism pervade my ways. I identified with it early on in college at a young age. I came to it through painting. Some of the most freeing ink paintings I've ever gazed upon opened up to me and I thought, wow, what were those guys looking at, feeling, and thinking about? So, I sought it out. All the old stuff. I began at the root of it all, the teachings of the monks and so on. I've read many translations to English from the Chinese. All of the Buddhist stuff, the Taoist stuff, most everything except Confucianism. What little I read of it didn't interest me. So, I stuck to its roots.

Then, there are the Greeks. Their idea of perfection is in my bones and in my heart. The idea that man and woman may reach a perfect state. A love that is perfect. A creation that is perfect made by hand interests me very much. The ideal in the mind. Balance interests myself. You see it in all the old Greek architecture, then I think about classical music. The movement toward perfection. The ideal in the mind. Plato. The ideal that the God's and muses visit us now. That art is a reflection of more than is possible in the world, more beauty than we are capable of in the world. A reflection of the heavens perhaps. It sounds like a contradiction to life, but it isn't. This is why I am torn. Yet again, this is why Asian thought interests me so much. Their belief in nature and imperfection as perfection is what interests me about it. It's amazing. It's encouraging and unique. It has to do with the unity of all things, oneness. I try to capture this universality of thought and emotion in my work, imperfection, and perfection, both ways of feeling, but, actually I don't try to as much as it just is part of who I am. It's there, in the work. You see this great tradition of classical form meeting my romance with Asian thought.

But if I was to speak about this subject formally the classical artist uses reasoning. The romantic bases all his decisions on emotions. I'm between the two. My tendency is toward the emotional side of things. In my current series, I'm using structure in different ways. Compositionally and through color choices. Both are informed by good reasoning and emotions but to go on in the direction I am the whole thing is driven by love. I mean, if this were a ship, my emotion is the initial charge making it move in a rational direction. It is love for this series that drives my reasoning. The colors will change throughout.

## **Color, Ideas, and Inspirations**

Black paint, it's everybody's to own. I use it sometimes. White paint is everybody's to own. I use it at times. You can't relate it to skin color because skin color is clearly not black nor white. It is more complicated than a solitary color. In confusion about this or that people want to do this, but they can't. Colors do not belong to anyone of us solitarily.

It is true that my colors symbolize ideas occasionally. But it is rare. One must be wary about ideas. Inspiration is better. I have a clean vision of something that comes to me freely and well



spirited, that is a vision. Like, I have a painting in my mind right now, it came to me sitting outside. That is inspiration. It's pure. It comes from within.

Ideas are often manmade, cliché at times. They exist on the surface of thinking, ideas can be felt, but are often caught up in measure whereas other ideas just exist and are shared. The thing is, we must feel to be felt. We must think to be thought of. Or, it is living without ideas, without constructs, and without inspirations. Ideas and inspirations are linked but not the same. Like I have outlined in *Twonism*, you cannot think something without the near opposite occurring. But, since opposites do not exist in real life I say that they are linked. Purity does exist, please don't mistake me here. There is inspiration that comes from inside of us. That is the purest form of thoughts and feelings. We reach that place where inspiration is the well spring of thought, of feelings for us to become our truest selves. Thus, a wholesome life is lived.



Twonism XXXX: Tandem, 2017, Oil on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches



## **Color: Nature and Culture**

In college, undergrad, I had been working with charcoal for about five years after I wanted to begin painting in color. Alice Aycock came into my studio at S.V.A. and told me to think about color like this, natural and cultural. Well, I've been working in and thinking about color ever since in this way. Fourteen years after the fact of speaking to her, I have discovered the truth for myself.

Natural color is observed color by human beings. Cultural color is the ultimate expression of color by humans. What is natural is everything. What is expressionistic of humans is different.

For years I've attempted to define these two ways of perceiving color. For a time, I thought of form – organic versus geometric or mechanical form. But not all cultural form is mechanical. It is expressionistic – a variety of form is capable by people!

## **Contemplation**

City people, I would not worry so much about politics in the big sense of things. It's turning the vast majority of you/us into fighters, once again. What we need is not fighting, but, slower paces of reality, contemplative feeling and action. This is what our country needs. It is my feeling and some others' that nature plays a huge part in family. It empathizes with us, and us with it if we are working with it. Nature, it is the world, the bigger picture – and it needs us. After all was your spouse not found, in nature?

## **Critics**

Essentially, the art critic's role in society is to elevate or to denounce the position of art living in society. I would say it is to bring positive awareness of the arts, but so often it doesn't.

## **Decisions II**

In life there are decisions. Some suffer more and some suffer less. Right decisions equal less suffering by you. Wrong decisions, equals more suffering. We hope we make the right decisions in life. If confusion is astray, I say, make your decisions at that time. It is hard knowing, but if you watch in your mind you will know once confusion arrives. The time is now, the struggle persists, and we watch in our mind with patience to know the outcomes.

## Dialogue: Justin Beachler and Damon Freed via FB Messenger

DF: Fuck man, if I see another drop shadow in abstract paintings I'm going to kill someone. It's like, to make it these days in the "abstract scene" you have to insert a fucking drop shadow behind some shape

If you're really going to let go of reality, then let go

JB: Lol. The abstract scene rn is lame for real



It all stems from the digital... (ms paint/post internet aesthetic done tedious analog). If you remember when I visited you in NY back in the day (2002), that shit was happening then! Yet I don't see that going away for a while and these kids don't look at the past unless it's a few days back on their feeds.

DF: Beachead what's hittin the streets

JB: Hmmm art rugs, tech shit (intense machinery), still on that bright color/dense pattern jpeg consciousness...new age/pseudoscience...I think people are so unsure of the future with us politics and environmental depression that they are grabbing for answers in new age shit again

DF: I'm getting objective-subjective with it, the color, the shapes, the behaviors. Call it New Agey. I'd love to do a session with you before you leave if I have everything together in time Justin. Would you like to experience a session?

New Agey... Lol

JB: We should try to make that work



## Discovery and Process

When in school there was a division, some of us identified strongly with post-modern artwork and irony and others more so with modern artwork and its uncompromising sincerity. I was in the second camp, but I am shaped by our times to a large degree. I rejected an ironic stance amid so much lack of sincerity while in school for a more honest and sincerer outlook with regard to my artmaking. But I wear many hats and have moved in many directions in keeping with the pace and attitudes of current life. I have expanded with it and continue to grow with life. I like the idea of a practice as splintered as the internet is regardless of the internet, mostly. Yet, I use it much. Gerard Richter was eye opening in his multi-disciplinary unity and approach and still is. As well as Picasso was and is with his approach to artmaking and is in even more pressing ways

to me now. Currently I go from painting pure abstracted paintings to abstracted and realistic landscapes to figurative paintings to hard edged still lifes, ink drawing and painting with Asian flare as well, and to expressive works in gouache and other mediums including works in charcoals and colored pencils. And within my poetry I range from lyrical rhyming poetry to “plain spoken” prose to lyrical prose to shaped and more visually nuanced poetry. It’s difficult to do something new, but I try to seek out discoveries, and they do occur. Some of my series’ will continue for a lifetime, some are left behind me.

## **Doubt**

Doubt is the natural state of mind of the artist while working. He is always trying to make the piece better! So, it is necessary when handling critiques to only show finished work. Otherwise, you will have a mess of questions to deal with which is a struggle for anybody involved. Confusion arises. But only when this happens as a result of the work being in an unfinished state of being!

## **Doubt is Pervasive from my Perspective**

I have hope in everything, most everything. But darkness exists. I cannot deny that part. I am stronger than ever, but I fear just like all people. One cannot deny this part of life. Perhaps the goal and the dream is to not fear living. Out of doubt arises fears, many fears, but I don’t.

Failures. Well, failures in my world, in artwork, is art that is made that other’s close to me doubted to the point of my cutting off those pieces from the rest of us. These are major failures. Other failures are formal conventions working out of personal clichés. Those are better avoided and easier to recognize, most frequently. Usually I can continue to work on them to bring them into fruition, the light. Personally, I try not to shed doubts in my paintings.



Twonism XXXXI: Bomber, 2017, Acrylic and Oil on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

### **Eastern Influence**

There are three major Asian influences on my work. The first influence is classical landscape painting from China, Japan, and Korea. The second influence is Chinese Taoism and Zen Buddhism. The third is calligraphy painting. Both Asian landscape painting and the religions of Taoism and Buddhism picture man within nature, not separate from it. In a late Ming handscroll the rock leans right and the figures bend right, as flow the moss and trees. Being part of nature man is observed in unison with all things.

Daily living seems to position man in conflict with his environment, but in reality, he is always in absolute harmony with the necessary push and pull of the process of nature. At times I visualize this feeling of balance in my painting through nonobjective means. A few words from the early seventeenth century Chinese landscape painter T'ang Chih-ch'i help to describe the feeling, "Brushwork pertains to the refined, untrammelled style and spirit, which should be harmonious, pure, and agreeable."

## **Feeling**

Passivity is the answer to the millions. Voids are us people. Therefore, paintings are voids. But within lies structure, therefore paintings have it. It is not what is seen, but what is felt, that counts!

## **Fighting**

When in battle it works best to have a leader and a follower if there are two pursuing the enemy. And there are only two scenarios in which I would fight when single and alone: life or death, and self-defense. I prefer to fight alone, if I must fight.

## **Firing and Forgetting**

There is a big difference between militaristic destruction and art making strategically, I envision outcomes, they seem to expect results! One cares and some others don't. "Fire and forget," a missile shot from sixty kilometers away he says. He doesn't get to see the results! The bloodshed and damage he's caused! The artist uses logic as a medium through which he develops an outcome. This outcome, I envision. If the outcome depresses me, or, is disturbing on some level of disagreement, I can abandon it! Now, I must admit to this, I have not abandoned much, of late!

## **For Allowing Dreams to Come Forth**

Dear Mitch Horowitz,

The spiritual in art seems to be a powerful vessel of thinking. It is so fussy to talk about it, or at least it can be. Yet, transmutation of materials willfully is how it's done. Alchemy. We mentally project our use into the colors; their meanings, associations, qualities, into the forms they lie within, at times! At which times in the present moment, they can pull on us physically and mentally. Astrologically combined into one, we move forward this way knowing other facets of

existence are there, other dimensions in space time. The paintings are not always for us. I mean, in the present. They are designed in such ways as to be there in the here and now, but will be more relevant in terms of the future. So, when I say I am spiritual, I mean I am producing work connected to future events. Paintings that will hold. I just don't consciously understand, why? Yet.

Although, I know their effects could positively affect change(s) to the future generations, so I go on making them in this way. Who knows, perhaps I am already there, making paintings in our time to affect changes to our future selves, to allow for progress down a path more smoothly than the trajectory we are currently on. Naturally, this is the healing power of spiritual work, the longevity of true values in the work. The protection offered by, Living forms.

Damon

### **For the Love of Money – Jeff Koons**

There seems to me a multitude of problems that have arisen from an artist who has hired out others to execute his ideas. The problem has been the artist losing touch with his materials. Or rather, gaining touch with a very shallow existence and surface way of manipulation of materials. Using the example of Jeff Koons, it is obvious. His paintings, superficial mashups of culture at its glossy worst are slick, dumbed down, and typical in all their thoughtful ways. As such, they exist as much photographically, as they do as paintings. And this is not to say that photographs are shallow, only in as much as photographs of paintings are, or at least should be in consideration to other work done in the field of painting.

You see, the artist is driven at times by his materials, by his compassion and empathy of process, by his investment whole heartedly into his inspirations, which I should say, are different than ideas, but I have said more about ideas and inspirations at other times. Ideas reside as collective notions upon the surface of thinking, wherein inspirations spring up from a deeper place within the individual.

At times, it could be said that the artist must listen to his materials, be at one with them, push them and be pushed by them. It is the being pushed by them that does not happen when telling others what to do with your materials. When it is you sitting back in your throne atop an ivory tower shouting commands, you are not personally finding out the lessons that your materials can offer, and nor are you making the discoveries that are possible through personal failures with your materials, accidents, and so on. As a result, it is dangerous, implausible, and selfish to gain sympathy, satisfaction, and even skills as compared to those who work hand in hand with their employees, or by themselves, in order to show the world their meaning through his or her materials, through personal expression.

Jeff Koons is a bully, a businessman at heart, an entrepreneur is the best way of putting it, but for what I ask? For momentary one offs, commentaries on contemporary living wherein the viewer must ask of themselves very little of themselves about what it is he or she is looking at, invested

in, and becoming. The work is pinned in, self-righteous, and bold in its thinking only. By way of felt emotion, what is there to be had? Experienced? And understood at best? At best, we as personal experiential people suffer from his expression, at best!

### **For the People of the World**

What today's artists represent is the sewing of a tradition not a departure from it. It is what is needed at this time. We look to the art of past generations and are conduits of beliefs, ideas, inspirations, and intentions embedded in painting's many coats throughout the years. My process no longer involves a dogged attack on past generations. It's no longer a race for originality. It's not a downing of the past like the older generations believed it was. Nor is my process aligned with Post Modernism and appropriation nor with their haphazard belief system. Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and Pop Art was a time of innovation, and to them, it was a separation from the past. The act of art making, to them, was a rebellion against the old vanguard, a killing of the mother and father, so to speak. It was a real attack on the past, and what they managed was good. America, during that time, needed to assert itself as original. But, in this world, in this culture, in this climate, in this moment of painting, we are experiencing a new crisis. I will elaborate. The crisis is different, therefore new ideas must greet the new times. But, we must sew the new with the old; together.

And this, in such a disjunct world of so called "globalization," is good. Globalization, this online world, what is it if not a grand detachment from the source, from family, from the old ways? You must realize that your family, your closest friends, near and far, need you in this removed and isolated global state. Now, I'm sure they're happy resting on the current state of the world, on the surface of concepts, and heartedly; those who joyfully float on their stomachs, face down, eyes closed, in comas, having jumped so hurriedly into the shallow waters. But, I say, the online news isn't enough. Facebook feeds aren't enough. Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, or Reddit, though hip, aren't enough.

Showing up, that's enough. Traveling, that's enough. Taking in the world in person, it's enough. Face to face . . . and what is painting; if it's not the deepest, most personal, most direct, along with the other arts, form of communication we as a people may create, together, as one people.





Twonism XXXXII: Family, 2017, Acrylic and Oil on Canvas, Eleven Panels, 42  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 171  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches

## Freedom I

I think people should be free. Free to do as they wish with their time as artists so long as they remain productive. But in this world, most do not understand this. Or, should they understand, something is preventing them from doing it or allowing it to go on. The individual is a powerful person. Not only must he or she understand others, but his or her own mind. You must recognize when your mind is turning on yourself. When others are about to also.

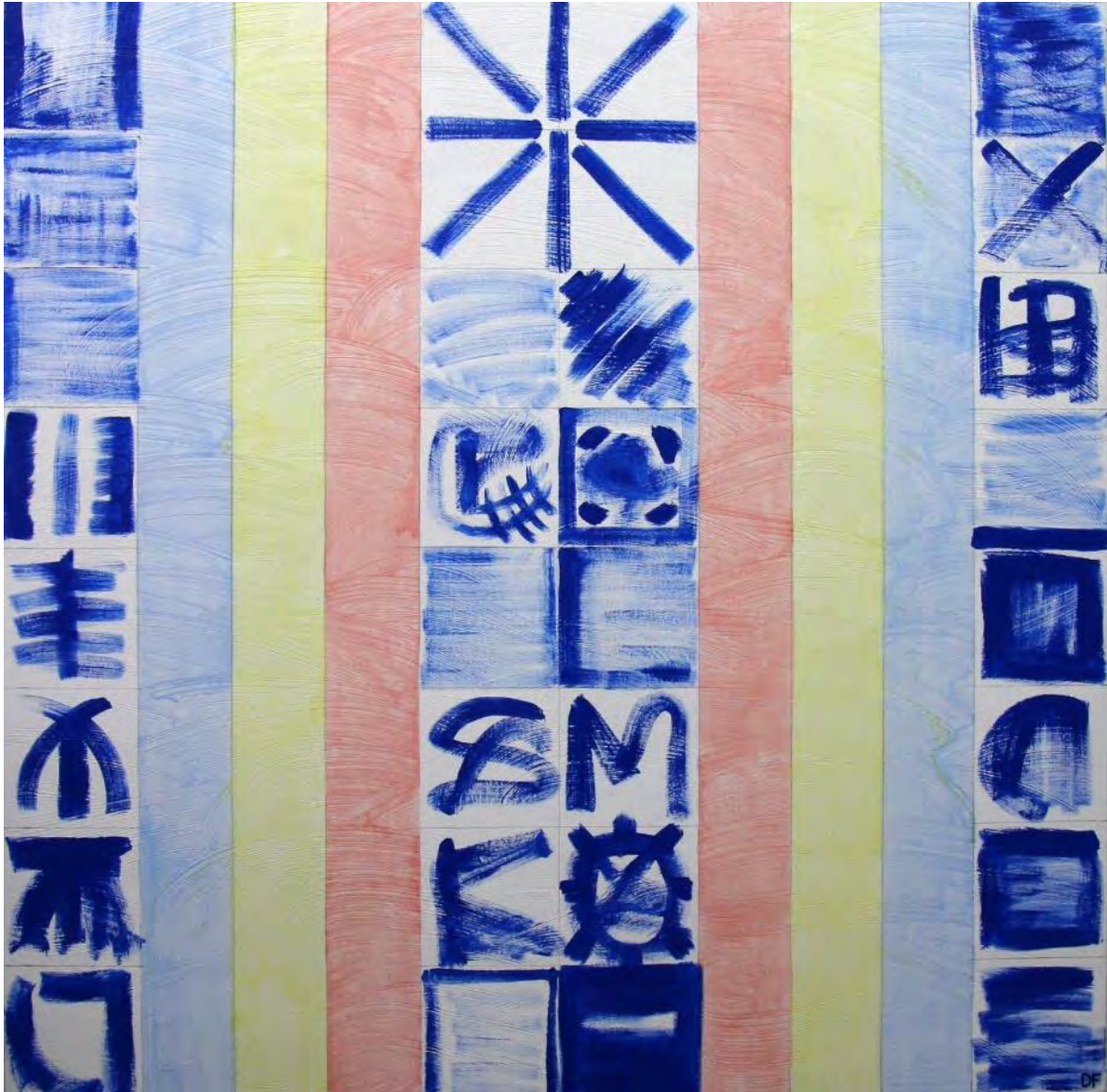
With other people, it's the same. Strength, what can I say? It's a dangerous path you're on as an artist. You have to provide others with confidence in yourself as they begin to trust you. Otherwise, you will never be free.

The world works in mysterious ways, but this one thing is clear, mostly...

Your aim and others should be toward survival, and there are many different ways to survive and that's a good thing!



Inspiration #0, 2020, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches



Inspiration #1: A Painting, 2018, Graphite and Acrylic on Canvas, 60 x 60 inches

## Freedom II

If you think we are free in this world, allow me to share this story with you. It is factual and not a joke. This summer, I was drawing frequently outside from nature. There were times I was so invested and acclimated to my surroundings that the environment was in me. Now, what I mean from this is that on several occasions I communicated with my environment directly and through drawing and without words. The animals responded by coming up to myself on several occasions. So, when I say I was "drawing from" nature, I mean it. But, you must have reverence while and when doing so. The slightest intimation of thought when connected to them, the animals, the natural setting, of harm will disturb them. So, you must be at peace in your thinking.



Well, I will tell you, afterwards one day, I visited my studio where I was sitting behind it. In my distraction from birds, I said to myself beneath my breath and internally to myself, "I'll get you fucking birds," slightly in jest and was shit on exactly in the top center of my head a millisecond after. Now, I will not for one second pretend to tell you I know why this occurred, other than for perhaps my mood was unsettling to others, but, in that moment I felt very watched. And I won't pretend to tell you I felt very connected to the whole in a harmonious and peaceful way, or that God was watching over me, or that coincidentally a bird happened to poop in that second above myself, because I wasn't and didn't feel that way. I was pissed off by it, and felt very small. Humiliated, even. So, when going to the polls and casting your ballot, keep in mind the power you have. It is real folks, like, terrifyingly. Do not let others prevent you from shitting in their general election because someone, is not letting us be ourselves.

## **Freedom and Love**

Here I am, up against it again, facing a nightmare of racism and inequality. Having had a dream of slaughter to my family I mourn my non-action. Integration, demonstration, and sharing love is the way. One cannot sit on their hands about this. One does not combat racism by killing more, by doing what was done to yourself to the enemy. It will never work this way. Creating a safe zone takes chances and that's what we have. One does not create a safe zone by eliminating diversity, sacrifice, and freedom. If you want our freedom, you must be willing to sacrifice your safety to a degree. The idea is not to purge the zone of attack but to demonstrate love. There are dangers, yes, but you have to be willing to provide, to struggle - to be free

## **Friends**

Friends, this world will stomp you down if you let it. Don't let it. Be free. Do what you want to do.

## **Funny**

I think it's funny. Some people try to pay you a complement, then, backhandedly take it back. They say things like, "Ohhh, how beautiful," then it's, "I like this work, it's less academic than your work you made in the past." Hah.

You know, it's funny the hours that go into this. More so than any other artist or connoisseur I know. And I must say this, because when it's me, in the studio, having fun, I don't appreciate the commentary. If you have nothing good to say, then don't say anything. If your jealousy runs so deep that you can't conjure a genuine statement about things, then don't talk.

## **Gender – June 21, 2006**

Why the fuss of gender in artwork? It seems a narrow polarization. What is the need for such a materialistic preoccupation when in the reality of mind this illusion of difference does not exist? We are capable of much less petty concerns. Gender in artwork represents a fearful mask, for once it is removed our likenesses are exposed and we participate in a more vulnerable art. Perhaps then we are able to reveal a bit of humility, a less selfish art. An art that does not perpetuate the façade of difference, is more agreeable, and realizes that humankind is not special, that we are not apart from all that is considered lesser.

## **Get Used to It**

In the age of the internet and globalization, it's difficult to be ignored, to go totally unnoticed, it's true. Particularly if you go to known schools for your education. And especially if you are a highly social individual where you live or in the places you travel to frequently, or online. If you show in commercial galleries and your work is accepted well by the press and so on, it makes it difficult to go unrealized. So, the model of van Gogh is a moot point here.

But I would like to talk a bit about my experience having lived between Jersey City, Manhattan, and Brooklyn for seven years. It was incredible off the top. Many connections and friends along the way were gained. But, it's a rat race. It is very difficult to make a living in New York at selling artwork alone in the beginning, at any time, so I left for my home state of Missouri.

Now, I would like to share with you all where I come from, the city of Sedalia, Missouri, a small town in the middle of the state. It falls nicely between four cities, Kansas City to the west and Saint Louis to the east. It is home to much fame including Scott Joplin, the inventor of Rag Time Music.

My parents moved here in the seventies from rural western Kansas. My dad was hired by State Fair Community College. Now, there is a contemporary art museum called the Daum Museum of Contemporary Art on campus. The museum exhibits contemporary art as well as the museum's collection. This has brought interest in the town to others from afar, including from New York City, Los Angeles, and other towns and cities surrounding the museum. So, to say I live in a town is a farce, and to say I live in a smaller town, rural in its making, would be even further from the truth.

But there is an err about this city that connects it to towns that are rural. In some ways it is a city and in other ways it is a town. A very small town. So I moved back here to reconnect with my roots, my city, my people, my town. And I am mostly happy making work from it for myself and others.

I have had a memorable exhibit at the Daum Museum here in my city in 2014. Otherwise, there is no place to exhibit my paintings for sales. My prices are too high. They are priced mainly

based on my exhibition records in cities outside of my birthplace. Much pain comes from it. Criticism mostly from friends and colleagues, mostly. And I wouldn't change it if I could. The pressures are off me around here for the most part. And this is what I am mostly writing to tell the world.

Create where you can, keep an err of freedom around yourself and keep this in mind, the less pressure the better for confidence. The less competition the better for confidence. I no longer compete from it. Freedom is our name. And I like where I come from. So, get used to it.

## **Go Your Own Way**

*“He who wishes to experience gratitude from his contemporaries, must adjust his pace to theirs. But great things are never produced in this way. And he who wants to do great things must direct his gaze to posterity, and in firm confidence elaborate his work for coming generations. No doubt, the result may be that he will remain quite unknown to his contemporaries, and comparable to a man who, compelled to spend his life upon a lonely island, with great effort sets up a monument there, to transmit to future sea-farers the knowledge of his existence. If he thinks it a hard fate, let him console himself with the reflection that the ordinary man who lives for practical aims only, often suffers a like fate, without having any compensation to hope for; inasmuch as he may, under favorable conditions, spend a life of material production, earning, buying, building, fertilizing, laying out, founding, establishing, beautifying with daily effort and unflagging zeal, and all the time think that he is working for himself; and yet in the end it is his descendants who reap the benefit of it all, and sometimes not even his descendants. It is the same with the man of genius; he, too, hopes for his reward and for honor at least; and at last finds that he has worked for posterity alone. Both, to be sure, have inherited a great deal from their ancestors.”*

—Arthur Schopenhauer, from *On Genius*, translated by T. Bailey Saunders

“Let the trends come to you.” This is how Marylin Minter addressed our class one day at the School of Visual Arts. It was a painting two course where you were expected to work freely. You walked into class and were expected to get to work on your own subject. After we accumulated enough work to display in front of the class Marylin would have individual critiques. This fostered a group ethic and healthy competition among classmates.

It rang true, her words. Don't go to the trends, let trends be trends and do *your* work. In the beginning it might be easiest to work that way, riffing on another's work. But as you work, as you move along, your path is your own.



Study of Neutral Browns with White, Grey, Black, and Yellow, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches

### **Good Luck with It**

I would like to write about my observations as an artist in this town, as a painter and drawer and poet. In doing so, I would like to own up to what I have to say, and in saying as much, etch out some ground for myself in our current milieu. There are, I'm finding, many artists who make art in our small city. This, above all else, is positive, but how can one go on thinking positively when so many are about money as an endgame to their artwork. I say this not as a polarity from meaning as an endgame, but, in the sense that their ethics are askew. Much of the work I see is about a fancy image or light process that will sell. You cannot go on pretending to make art about money and vice versa if it is not made in a way to merit such. So many conversations, meaningless conversations for the most part about the commerce of artmaking and very few by way of meaning, conversations of meaning. It's pillow talk for the most part. To be sure, an artist needs an outlet to display their work, their merits. But what I see and what I hear are in most cases very thin attempts at doing so. You must start at ground zero, base one, with the brass tacks of it all if you are going to have a prayer at making it as an artist in this city, or in any other city for that matter. Now, I've not been one to ever survive from artwork alone, I've worked at other



jobs my entire life to support a career of meaning. And you can't expect to sell your art to make ends meet and nor can you expect to make art at all when it is simply about making a buck or two. That is not art. The artist is true to him and herself. It is about personal and universal expression. So, a call is in order for those artists with the thin work to think about it, and to think hard about what they want in this city. Do you want to sell and make art while doing so, because if so, it's a harder road than any of you know, to my eyes. And fortunately, my eyes have merits to them. Take risks. Make mistakes. You must to survive as an artist of meaning. That's how it's done. You will succeed in the long run. But it has to start somewhere and somehow, and someway at some time.

I have spent my lifetime praising other artists for what they do and how they do it, for what they did and how they did it. We are in a tradition of artists. I expect you to respect the tradition as an artist. It begins there.

## **Guided by Crosses II**

I seem to be engaged in making crosses. Part of me wonders if one can succeed in stripping the cross of its worth. I want to create a cross of nothing, no meaning. Can it be done? No religiosity to it. Simply, spirituality.

## **Hard Work**

*"The artist is no Sunday's Child of life"*

—Wassily Kandinsky, from *On the Spiritual in Art*, 1911

Kandinsky's quote, to me, means something other than it's likely intended to. His meaning likely is that the artist doesn't subscribe to a religion outside of his or her own working method and meaning, but, I like the quote in another way, out of context. I prescribe a different meaning to it and it's this: the artist is a hard worker, a thoughtful laborer who works by him or herself, and who rarely has a Sunday off! It turns the idea of the Sunday painter on its head.

What some don't realize about art making is that it's hard, hard, hard work. In the world, you would be surprised to know how many believe it's an easy road, a day in the studio of the artist. The misconception of going to your studio to work is there. When you meet some people out for a drink at the end of the day, if you do, whom you know or don't know, it happens with both, the response when you say it was a tough day in the studio may waver a chuckle. And when they go to work doing construction, or pipe fitting, or managerial work, or what have you, I do my best to listen and understand. A hard day is a hard day any which way you cut it.

I think some people must feel as though since we love what we do, which must be our fault in some way, that it's always easy. They may feel like we just sit around all day until inspiration strikes and then we create inside a world filled with rainbows and unicorns. This is nonsense. It helps to love painting, and there's a lot of good days, but, it's not always a smooth road in the studio. First of all, it's you, that's it, just yourself motivating yourself. And therein lies a large part of the dilemma and burden. And, of course it's not anybody's fault other than your own if you can't get your work done. But, those days are the hardest. When you're nothing but inside your mind turning circles, one after another, fighting with yourself about this thing and that thing and the other thing. It's a tough job controlling one's own mind and emotions to focus. Most of the planning is done by yourself. Most of the work is done by you alone. Most budgeting is done by yourself. The finances, the laboring, the outcomes, the promotion of the work to galleries, all done by one person. Nothing is outsourced, except for the work when shipped to galleries. And that's a relief in the process because at least we don't have to deal with that side of the work.

### **He Said, She Said – circa 2011**

“Why do you not appear lost,” he asked the girl? She said, “I have two legs, how could I possibly be lost?” He said, “If you did not have legs, would you appear lost then?” She said, “I have two arms, how could I possibly be lost?” He said, “If you had no arms, would you appear lost then?” She said, “I have eyes, how could I possibly be lost?” He said, “If you did not have eyes, would you appear lost then?” She said, “I have ears, how could I possibly be lost?” He said, “If you did not have ears, surely you would be lost!” She said, “If I did not have ears, perhaps then, we each would be found!” Abstraction is like this at times, you stand in front of it, and are silenced!



He Said, She Said, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 46 x 46 inches

### **Hillary Clinton**

It is as though in this world the artist can't escape their leader. The leader of the people. His leader. The leader that is elected by the people determines to no small degree what people think. He or she has the ability to sway public opinion, their leader. But, if one rebels it is for freedom. Freedom from ideals. Freedom to feel freely. And to think clearly about a situation. The situation at hand is a woman leader who without knowing it changes who's in charge in day to day living.

This is out of control. Our world as we know it is undergoing differences so subtle as to make one regret living. I will not, no matter what vote for a leader who by no means possible rules our lives. This is to say I stand for men.

## **Histories**

What you have today are artists without a fundamental worldview, or outlook basis, achieved through art making. No understanding of histories. What you get are half-baked works of art not acknowledging, nor willing to acknowledge predecessors. And this, for the soul purpose of selling their art to the establishment, are predilections built on lying. Lying about the unique qualities of their artwork is not art and they are created to build a mythological strain of intelligence, and most of all, heart! When in actuality, they fall flat in front of me. In front of the face of someone who actually has heart, and heart for the traditions who built this life for us and him.

Take, for example, Basquiat. A mostly naïve artist, sans the milieu he belonged to in the times he was creating his own aesthetic. Deservedly, he was in fashion for a short period of time, yet why could he not handle the pressures of society, then. He was famous before a racist public, yes. But I'm willing to bet, had he steeped himself in knowledge of the self, the artworld, and the histories of artmaking further, until finding himself entirely – prior stepping in front of the spotlights, he may have survived a lifetime of creating.

You see, life is built on it, on the past. And to acknowledge it in your work at times is a good thing, in front of the right, people. It's just that those involved solely in making money from their art are not steeped in it. Therefore, they fail to respect others. A morally inept position. Now, having said that, it works both ways, in and out of Love. Having come from money, I have made the time to create works of art that are both innovative and new, steeped in tradition as well!

But I say but, we are not them. We are not them, not our forefathers and mothers of the past's histories. Therefore, we must react to our own times. Hence, the fierceness of my recent posts on here. I am 42 years of age at this thing here, and I'll be damned if someone comes between I and, it. You might catch me sleeping in person, but you will go down eventually, on here.

And all this making money has to do with what, with a white man in a cowardly society.

## **Homosexuality and Others**

It would seem to me that there are three major categories of thought and realities on the subject. One, is that the individual is born into his or her sexuality, two, is that it is a choice, and three, is that the individual is more or less confused, less I say beaten into submission by chance by some external force.

For the sake of clarity on this matter, I speak as a straight male on this subject. Yet, I have experienced the forcefulness of thought against my position in our world. Regularly, I might add. So, it is not a matter of who is free to think and feel as they wish any longer, be it a question of solidarity on the subject.

Also, some of the thoughts that have pervaded my thinking are these: Once, I was asked by my father at a very young age if I thought he was gay. This remains a traumatic experience to myself. Next, the tendencies of others pressing in on myself, such as male friends with biases, females, and those of other tendencies. The forcefulness of political freedom, of religious conservativisms as well. Lastly, the damaging of youthful minds filled with garbagy thoughts due to extreme drug taking and the sorts.

We, as a people, are at a loss. We cannot go on in this manner of living. I mean, we can, but at what cost? People, strong people, are pressed to act out against it. To adhere to conservatism amidst a crowd of mindless peoples.

## Hope

*“The history of the state sketches in course outline the progress of thought, and follows at a distance the delicacy of culture and of aspiration.”*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, from *Politics*, 1844

With the current administration, just twelve days into office, we as artists are in risk of losing much, government is indeed extremely distant from our thoughts and feelings at this time, but, above all, it is We whom must not lose. Here, in this country, Our United States of America, we remain free to practice varied disciplines of self-expression and of unique awareness, of self and of others. Remember our privilege. I would not allow politics to stand in the way. No matter how pervasive it may become to our day to day, I suggest a healthy withdrawal from time to time. Work with politics when absolutely necessary. Rekindle that which makes you strong and together, stable and aware, Sturdy and Solid. By no means resort to the same rigid tactics, or of any tactics, scheming, subjugation, or terror of any kind that is so adamantly performed by others whom may be politically involved or otherwise. The result of this type of political interaction is undoubtedly paralysis of the mind and heart. The only way to combat it is to not combat at all, but to provide obedience to love. Love for one’s self and of others. I hope it is clear that I am not combatting. But that it is inspiration and optimism for a better way that I sit and write; aggression is not the answer. You see, there is a way to see the light and to understand something clearly, and it is a direct path, so long as we listen to our mind and see with our eyes. We understand that shadows exist, but, it is us whom are in pursuit of the sun and whom will not be stifled.

This country is good. We are astray. But, as Emerson so boldly stated a long time ago, government is a ‘distant’ reflection of our people’s goals, wonderment, and hopes. It takes understanding and time. Give it time. However long it takes is what it takes. Patience is a virtue,

but speak up. Express yourself not crassly, but in a direct and assertive manner. Ugliness is what wars are fought over, we artists, are not about this, not about fighting or winning or losing. May morality be our guide. And survival be our guide. May above all, we seek a humane, a civilized, and a patriotic stance amid the destructive behavior of members of this country that voted into office bad people, of unsound character. May we seek outcomes not results.

### **How Artwork Communicates: A Possibility of How**

There is a part of me that seriously believes paintings, artwork, is communicative non-verbally, of course that part, but I mean, that we can in a way stand before a painting and think and feel, or look, and have optical sensations and thoughts and feelings across time and space with each other. I mean, it's not like a manufactured soulless object, paintings, they express and so do we. Therefore, when acquiring an artwork, I suggest making the decision a meaningful one. Because who knows, you might just end up conversing with that artist for a very long time to come. Like, when we stand before these things, a kind of communication happens. It is let out into the world, the communication. If you know the artist personally, I believe the communication can happen directly. But, if you don't, I believe it is more indirect, like a ripple in time and space – your thinking and feeling that occurs in front of the object affects people around you, and therefore, as artists and as individuals we must take our work and responses quite seriously.

### **I Can Draw to Save My Life**

Drawing is where it all started for me. My first maturity, once I was on my own happened through drawing in and outside of my schooling. And as much as I love to paint abstractly, if it was a matter of survival with the conservatives at the helm, I say, “I can draw to save my life.” Realistically, that is. It comes easily to myself. And this alone is one of the reasons I insist on pushing myself into more and more abstract places.

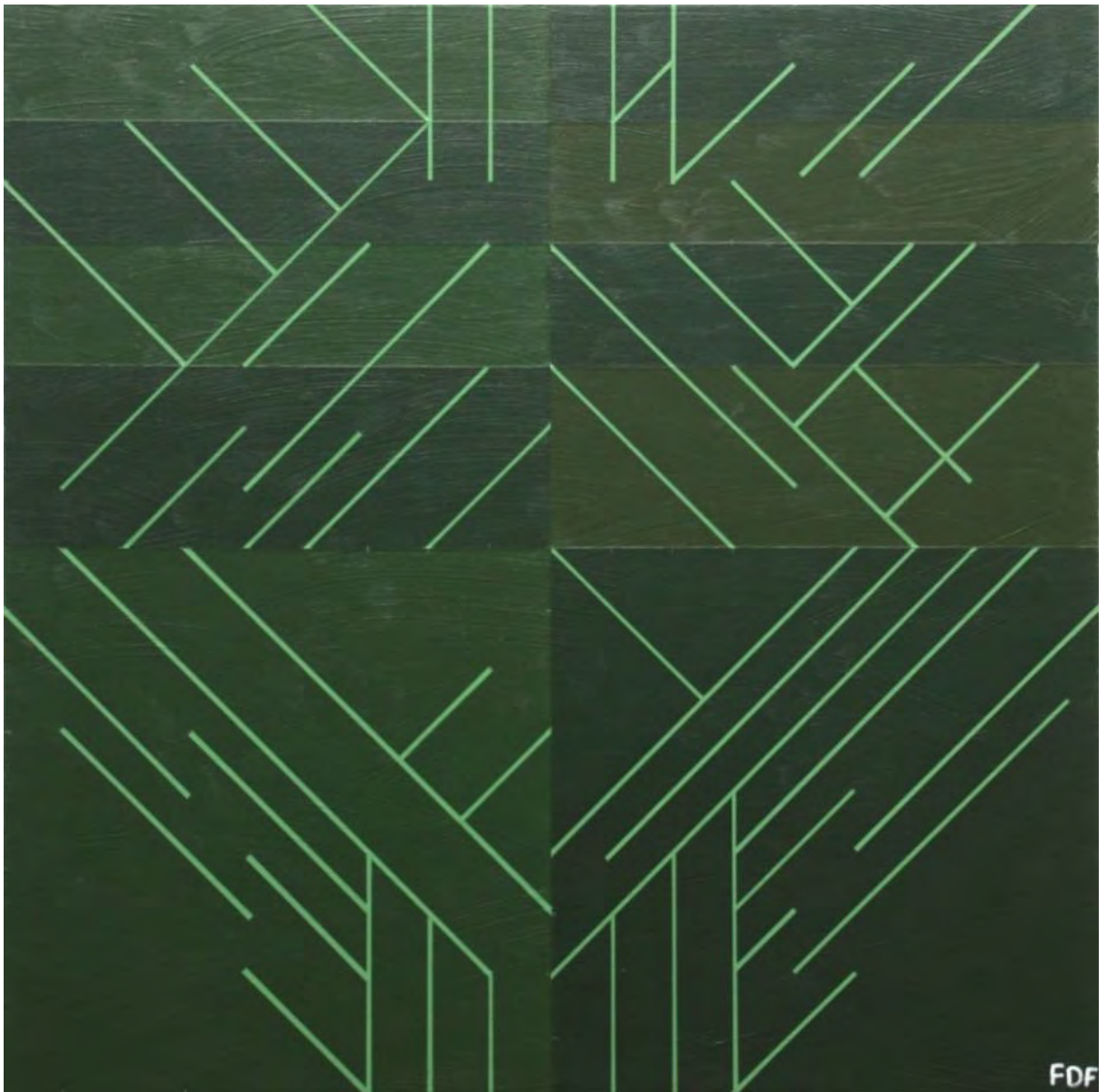
### **I Just Paint Them**

It's not the artist's job to know the meaning of his work. That's the world's job, I guess. I just paint them. Yet, there have been other times when I thought, well, it is our job to make a statement.

### **Impetus Caused by Emotion – Moving Towards the Happiness**

It's all driven by emotion, my paintings, no matter the subject matter – the right line or shape, the right proportion, the correct balance – it's all my emotions that decide what to do, and when I see

it, I know it. You see, it is emotion that drives the work. It takes some minor math wherein the intellect is involved, but that is just the means to get there, to express the emotion. From the first line to the last, from the first color to the last, emotion is heralded. From the first thought to the last, pure emotion. It is a movement toward happiness, each painting. That's how you know when the painting is complete. Are you happy with it? If my mind says yes, then, I sign the painting! Sometimes the happiness is so overwhelming that even after I've signed it, I make a couple more moves and marks. Then I know when to stop.



The Burning Bush, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 36 x 36 inches



## In Reading, “Sanford Wurmfeld: Color Seminar”

### I. My Notes on, “Art as a Presentational Paradigm”

I identify with wholeness, but not as Piaget says it. And with transformation, to a degree, but not as Piaget says it. Wholeness, resonated deeply when I read it from the book, and transformation, lightly.

As quoted by Sandy, in his recent book on color, Piaget claims, “The elements of a structure are subordinated to laws, and it is in terms of these laws that the structure *qua* whole or system is defined.” He goes on to quote Piaget again, “the character of structured wholes depends on their laws of composition, these laws must of their very nature be structuring: it is the constant duality, or bipolarity, of always being simultaneously structuring and structured.”

Wurmfeld goes on to state, “Piaget calls these ‘laws of transformation,’ writing that ‘the transformations inherent in a structure never lead beyond the system but always engender elements that belong to it and preserve its laws.’” Yet, in my own words, and my own understanding, and to proceed with discovery, the artist creates! I will show you.

There is no system to refer to, in essence. And even if we were to suppose it to have one, it seems to me, that to merely refer to its own system and laws of ordering, would be to undermine the creative process by way of government, or governing. I should rather have liked him to say, Piaget that is, “...*at times* lead beyond the system.” And into unknown grounds, like an anomaly, or rather a *mutation*, if we were to refer to a more scientific understanding of Laws of nature. And it is in these mutations, that we find – Life! As such, we progress down a path further.

### II. Notes for, Sandy

Structure is the root of the expression, not thee expression! Not in a total sense. Color serves as the *modus operandi*!

### III. Men & Women

I should not dwell too long. But, when writing on the *root* of expression I have discovered it to exist in, *beauty*! To heterosexual men, at least. It seems to be rooted at least partially – in *women*. In my mind, I make a subtle demarcation in between God, and Nature. Which for the sake of argument I would like to just call it – Nature.

### IV. On Beliefs

Painting is enough, to me. Yet, questions remain strong, in me!

For example, what is it to that glowing effect of Albers'. There's something, to it!  
And the odd pairing of poems on the backs you showed us way back when! The connection to it? Well, faith. In Man.

**Question:** Why do away with Atmospheric Space in general? Perhaps, 'tradition', is why? I think it might be better in person, to discuss this, but I think atmosphere IS a term unlike any other, in painting. It does lack the autonomy of terminology akin to your liking in the sense, of realistic terms for things but I like how readily descriptive, it can be!

You're right in a sense even still because your way draws a parallel to film and not to life in general outside of painting technique. Very nonobjective, of you!

## **Indoctrination of Figuration**

During my schooling and now it feels as if the ideology of style is, if you're not a figurative artist that it won't work. Your career will suffer from it, your ideology will suffer from it, and your life will suffer. Well, it's all true, especially the last part! Thank you. Oh, and it's bullshit that it has to be that way, but then again, I'm sure others feel differently.

## **Infinity**

I have a great understanding of abstraction because of my dad. At an early, a very early age, I remember standing in front of a brownish black painting of his. I was moved by it. Emotionally and spatially. It was like a vastness opened up to me. A mystery of feeling. Yet, I could walk away from it if I wanted to. Time was immense in front of it. The most compelling and mysterious experience I've ever had in front of a painting was this. Also, Rothko has moved me in a similar manner of feeling in times since then. It's so difficult to put words to an abstract emotional experience. Very difficult. But, we must try. To let others in on the secrets of being and of feeling, we try to offer up kind words of likened experiences. Likenesses of the experiences. I try so hard to put into words what that experience is like. Infinity in a single moment seems the only way to describe the experiences in this moment. And it's what I'm searching for in my own work. That feeling of vastness, of infinity of time, of motion, of feeling, and of space. But also, there needs to be a subtle physicality to the work, the paintings. A subtle, but rich indication of materiality goes a long ways. And I feel like my work, the surfaces of my paintings, finally indicates this much.

## **Inspirations and Ideas**

I believe there are two ways in which artwork gets made. Inspirations and

ideas. An idea is a manmade mental construct, essentially. The ideas of time and space are each mental constructs insofar as they depart from material reality. Most ideas float around on the surface of the conscious collective and are less original and more readily available to a wider populace. An inspiration, however, is rooted in the subconscious and unconscious. I believe in a faith-based response to life and in a response to the subconscious and unconscious, which is where empathy for the human collective resides the deepest. Faith in the human collective and in yourself and others is expressed consciously most of all, but the subconscious and unconscious states of mind are its well-springs. There is a bountiful source of inspiration in life and I don't mind calling it the divine or the subconscious and unconscious. We as artists tap into these states frequently. I believe inspiration is more mysterious than ideas are – and that inspiration exists as the purest form of creation, as it stems from the root of all creation, from inside of us, and is the most direct form of God & Nature.

Thinking is involved in the ideation process. No thinking is involved in the inspiration process. It comes to you from inside of you. Inspiration is the purest and truest form of perception. I believe, as others have, that inspiration and perception precede thinking. Inspiration through perception is responding to life without comparison, or hindsight, or alteration, or editing, as it is a moving forward always, and keeping within the present moment. Thinking comes after perception. Thinking compares that which was perceived originally with that which was perceived before and after the original inspiration. Ideas are the result of this process – the thinking process. Ideas can be helpful, but they are a reduction or a synthesis of multiple viewpoints. Essentially, ideas are inspirations and perceptions that undergo modification through indecision, therefore ideas are secondary in the process of artmaking. Inspiration and perception are what matter the most.

Inspiration comes from tapping into our subconscious and unconscious minds in moments of clarity. There is the self which is composed of – the conscious mind – the subconscious mind – and the unconscious mind. As artists the subconscious and unconscious minds are presented or depicted.

There are two ways a painter can give back to the viewer in terms of light. One is to depict light like Vermeer did in paintings, demonstrating the illusion of effects of light. The other way is to present light, or to use highly saturated colors and tinted colors that reflect light back to the viewer. Light gives and dark takes. Of course, paintings do both but remain to this day realistic, abstract, or nonobjective. Realism is concerned with the depiction of light. Abstraction is concerned with both the depiction and the presentation of light. And nonobjective art is concerned with the presentation of light.

In the paintings I try to present light, not depict it. At times, in my representational work I illustrate lighting effects. But, as for the nonobjective work, it's presented.

I would like to tell you about a very fascinating phenomenon that occurred

at my last gallery discussion. There were many questions asked about my work, my landscapes, all good questions and interesting to me, but there was one question that stood out the most. And upon my answering it, I lost my audience. The question went something like this, “Do you show light in your paintings?” And my response was, “The light comes from the reflection of light off of the colored surfaces.” You see, light can be discussed, but once it becomes detached, too detached, it doesn’t matter to the audience, or so it appeared.

Light can be illustrated in a painting by demonstrating lighting effects in object-oriented ways, as witnessed outside your windows. Or, one can manifest inner strength, or “light,” through color selection. This, I do. And essentially, the result of using bold coloration is this: from a scientific and artistic standpoint, I understand that highly saturated color reflects the most optimal amount of light in the room. White reflects the most amount of light in a room.

So, I missed out in a way by answering the fantastic question the way I did. What I should have said is that I am not interested in illustrating light, but that I am interested in manifesting colors that correspond with my emotions to say the least; colors that happen to demonstrate strong emotional correspondences through vibrancy and hue. Colors that are bold and bright, that are rich and soulful; colors that come from my spirit, perhaps, and ones that reflect not only natural light, but my inner light, my personality.

And, all this about we are no different than those who painted in the caves, well, yes, we are still the same, but we are, because of this reason in advance of technology, artists are! Our thought moves quicker and faster than other people’s. Because we are aware of Inspiration!

I remember having this discussion in college. Speed is a very important aspect of artmaking, and the slowing down also is. There is technology that exists because of art, customized after ideas or inspirations found in artwork, inspirations realized through artmaking. The inspirations come from inside of us artists, inside of the world. Our inspirations precede thought patterns and realized technology.

Because we work with nature, our inspirations tend to travel faster than other’s inspirations, as nature is worked with in the artwork. Inspirations spring up through God and Nature, thereby, through us and into the artwork. Inspirations travel through God; ideas simply through people.

Yeah? A cave man you might call me, but this is the brass tacks of it all. I’ve been engaged with them each my entire life, technology and art. No instrument of technology has ever come close to the visualizations created by artworks. Art works manipulate perceptual reality to extreme departure from reality, it would seem, at times, but really, art is just that advanced, and is the reality. I offer you moments in history wherein our perceptions have been altered. Starting with modernity and Monet tiny dots or swaths of color placed side by side to create depth

and illusion; then with the Fauves a flattening of space accompanied by arbitrary placement of colors, then with Cubism the construction of multiple viewpoints and angles of an object in space (an object or a figure seen from all sides existing at once); then with Kandinsky who was a Fauve prior to his turning a painting of his upside down unintentionally thereby recognizing in it a certain nonobjectivity (i.e. perceptual advancement by way of nonobjective painting); Surrealism and Dali the illusionistic at its height in degrees created by the melding of objects into one another, in space, and then on and on it goes until now! And before these guys and gals you had many advancements as well. So, really, when I hear about new technology, I get bored quickly, because well, my work is perceptual. There simply are more imaginative and realistic components to what I do that make sense to me in advance of culture's investigations into technology. As I've said before artists are in advance of real-life technologies, this is to say, our thoughts embodied by paintings are if one identifies with Inspiration.

## **Invention II**

My art takes on many outward appearances and it seems there is a fundamental drive to it all. I think really it comes down to an approach, maybe two that are connected beneath of it all! There is the work that is invigoratingly fresh, and the work wherein I am painfully toiling with invention! By now, it is happening, the toiling, in both my abstraction and my representational works. I see this now. But of late, it is happening! On days it gets to be too much, I turn to my landscapes and capture a mood or some other kind of simultaneous happening. These works are airy, and wildly natural. The rest of the time I am working on the fundamentals to create something of merit to us all. A great painstaking project is underway to encompass what is, something new! Something alive with it, with invention! So, I go on through all the appearances seeking and finding what that thing looks like on the outside and in. Meaning, through visual appearances and through feelings synchronized through it all, through the process of it all, to create artwork.

## **Invention Versus Innovation**

Many things are invented daily that do little more than to reenact similar functioning of thoughts as before. Innovation, on the other hand, is new. It takes a step into the opposite direction, so to speak, springs forth from creation and is complete.

## **It Alters Perception**

Perception is the whole thing. Perception alters reality. We perceive, we see, we feel. From one individual to the next, perception is altered. From one setting, or experience to the next, also

altered. Reality alters perception. Taking a prescription drug, having an alcoholic beverage, smoking a joint, we see differently. It must be said, perceiving is a reality.

And perception is the whole thing really, it is thought about, it is felt, and it is reality. So, I go on making these paintings in my mode of feeling and it alters our reality. So, really, the question must be – how do you want reality to look, to feel, to be? I, personally, have the answer for myself. And this answer is called upon each day I live. Yet, there is a reality to it that cannot be seen yet that lies in the accidental, or in the vulnerability of chance. Now, you either let it into yourself or not, this is the question? Therefore, on most good days I let it in! It softens us to let it in. Like rain.

### **It Has to do with Others**

Some people would like to think, in my opinion, that art is like industry. Meaning: You work within a pyramid scheme, holding onto nothing as you move upward, utilizing influences to make your name, moving upward within a scheme. But I'm here to tell you otherwise. It's not like that. It bounces you around like a pinball machine. It is broad, the vastness, and you will find out if you stick with it. You are shot right through the narrowest tunnels ringing bells all the way through, smoothly, but not without beating around on the walls that guide you a little first.

### **It's a Long Journey**

To young artists starting out! Know that there is a long line in front of you. The socio-economical-political value scale is not tipped in your favor, yet, but hope is! So, paint whatever brings you happiness in whichever and whatever way you may. Place your morals into your work as you age. Support your foundation. That very foundation brought you to be. Rest.

### **It's Just the Way It Is – October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016**

Conditions in the studio this evening are almost romantic, near ideal. Except that I'm sitting near the front doors where I can see my neighbors working. On the floor in front of me are three rolled canvases into one roll. Descending Swans is moving in the distance; Ascending Pigeons fights for ground to the right and wins a step or two. I wasn't ready to move onto it but it pulled me its way so I will. The world is moving and so will I – in time. It takes time these things. In time. And every little painting no matter how big or small contains ugliness. And every little painting no matter how big contains prettiness. It's just the way it is.



Infinity, 2020, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

## Judgement

When I mounted the exhibition for this show, Obstacle & Void, at the Bruno David Gallery I remember asking myself, in my mind, for judgement to be passed. Well, the show is down and nothing sold but I'm on top! So, there you have it, a good reminder that success is not weighed monetarily. Happiness runs its own course independent of income. Bottom line. And though there were disappointments along the way, over the course of the exhibition's run, I am



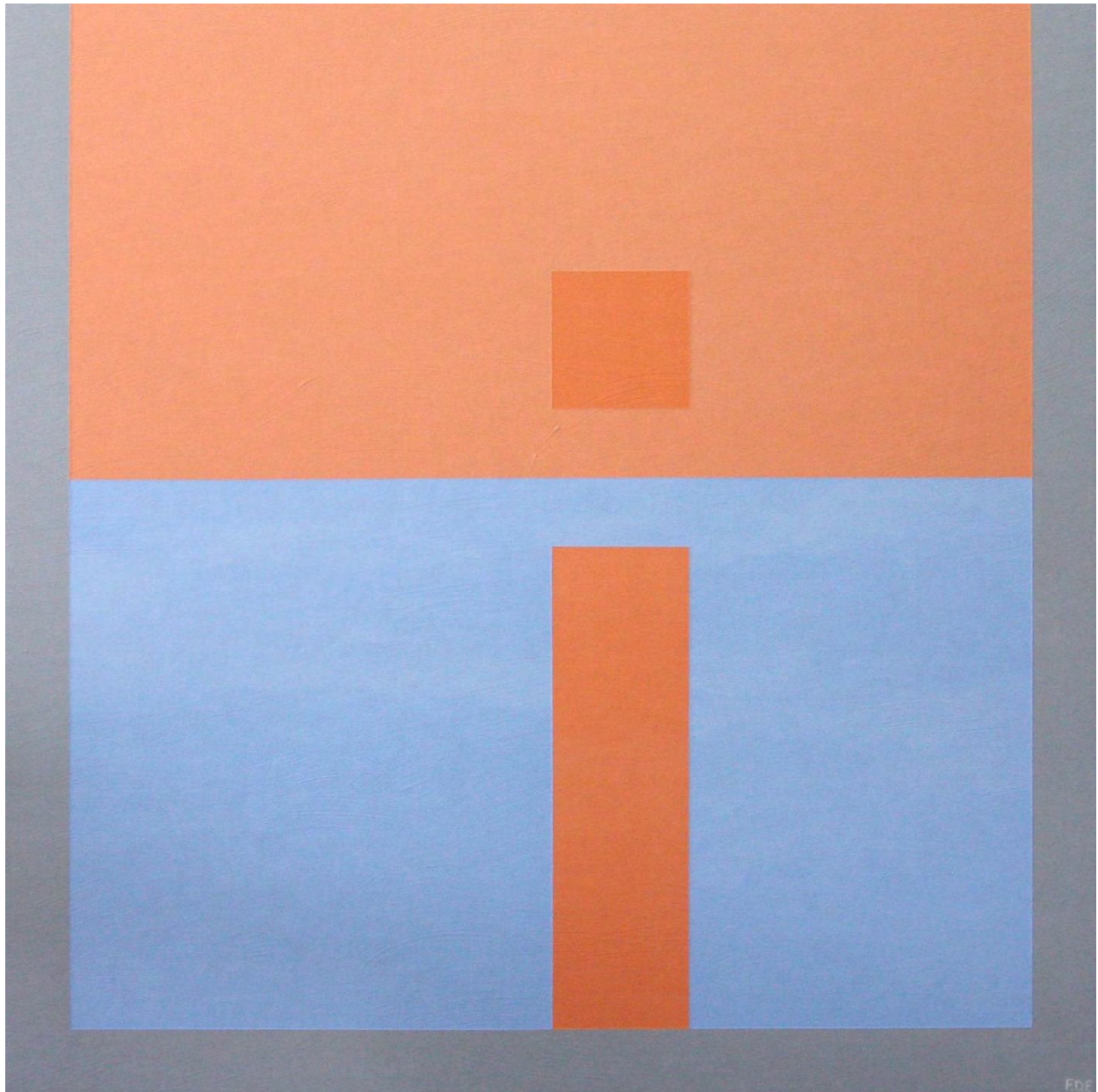
contented! Judgement, in this painting, is expressed lightly with the scales evenly weighted. Go for it! Truth is always... a surprise. 😊



Obstacle & Void 16-Judgement, 2021, Acrylic on Canvas, 19.5 x 18 inches

## Just a Little Crazy

In the famous words of Brice Marden, “I wouldn’t trust an artist if he, or she, wasn’t a little crazy!” Well, it’s true. And not all work is rational from beginning to end. Isn’t that the beauty of it all?



Morning Worshiper: Morning Sunrise, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 60 x 60 inches

## Know Your Mind

People will tell you things as an artist; give you advice and things and such. They will say, “That’s not a good sign!” or, “I don’t think that works.” or, do this and do that. But, you must listen to yourself. Know the truth. Words from others don’t count always. Go with the feeling inside. Your gut response to their words. That is *your* direction.

The way you should go. The truth is, it is . . . *the way you should go*.

Do what makes you happiest. If it’s a love go for it! If it’s love through what you do I say go for it.

There will be pitfalls in whatever you decide to do. No matter what you love or how much you love to do it people will disagree with you. And that’s a struggle. You can’t spend all of your time listening to what other’s have to say about this or that in terms of your own work. Ignore the negative people. Begin to see who your support system is. Your true support for you matters. There will be days like this one that they disagree.

But persevere. You might be ahead of them in your thinking and that’s a good thing. Sometimes it works this way. And it’s hard knowing that but it’s the case. You have to walk the line with life but do it in your way. Do it your way but try not to offend unless it’s at the risk of losing oneself. Reach out your hand in help and others will too. Like this one time I was just driving. Another helped me to understand that I was in charge, and in your work, driving is best. So be a driver. Remember at the end of the day, after listening to everyone, you get to decide what’s best for yourself. Their advice may be beneficial to you in the future but might not be in line with your current needs. They also may be ahead in their thinking of you at times. You must be aware. Listen to yourself and to others. Know your mind the best you can. That’s our duty as artists, to know our minds. And if you succeed in knowing yours, you will be remembered. And you must understand others through the understanding of one’s self. So be sensitive to other’s needs if you would like to call them friends much longer. So really, it’s an understanding of one’s own mind and of yourself, and of the world that makes one a good artist! In my humble opinion.

Good luck!

## Learning

Picasso was a genius, this is for certain. Inspirations are pure, they come from the inside and Picasso and Braque both had inspirations, and they were both good at pushing one another. You see this beginning with Picasso’s, *Le Femmes d’Alger*. Braque moves away from his Fauvist style then, after having viewed Picasso’s painting. And when Braque created all those paintings with the wood graining technique in his studio and then left for a time, only to return to Picasso having mimicked his idea, there, you see Picasso having used Braque’s inspiration.

I did this once. I was having a difficult time getting through to my studio mate while in school. So, I used what was his idea of imagined imagery based in childhood nostalgia and went with it. It worked to communicate on a level deeper than we had achieved to that point. He said to me, “Damon you may be the better artist, but I’m smarter.” It hurt. But, he had a point. Finally, I had gotten through to him.

You see, he was well read at the time and I wasn’t. He was pulling his story lines from within and without and I was working from within and without as well. We were both sophisticated people.

You see the human connection is deeper than we would like to believe. When love is at stake you just don’t give up you have to communicate on some level. So we do our best to communicate in positive ways even at the sacrifice of losing oneself in the moment. I’m happy to call him my friend. But, after that semester we ended our commitment to our friendship so that we could be alone again. It was necessary for our learning.

## **Learning and Teaching the Arts in College**

I remember thinking, how in the life of me will I ever be able to “teach” art? In the beginning I thought about it a lot. I thought, how does one teach art to someone. It’s such an individualistic endeavor. It is rooted in the self.

But my thinking has changed. The self is not separate from others merely. There are tools one can be taught, mechanisms to challenge the individual can be learned and taught. To change is the challenge, the challenge of all people. And some believed the child should be left alone. And, this is true to a degree within the classroom as well. I believe the student is myself and the student also. We are engaged together. We study together. It is learning and teaching always. We learn and behave as a unity. Therefore, art is not teaching but learning and teaching and behaving. Always together as a unity. It is not lecturing merely. It is not demonstrating merely. It is not working together merely, but apart as well. It is everything, all of it at once. This is art teaching. This is how it is done. Together and apart. Through learning and teaching.

## **Lesson #1**

Nature and God is who and what decides if you will become an artist...

Nature within us and all around us. God, the power that is. These two forces combined align to create the artist within you. Should you avoid, put off, or neglect this aspect of his being and your being, you might suffer from it. Surely, I have when becoming lazy. It’s kind of like finding yourself, you know? Once you know you know becoming an artist. But, if you are like me, you



might end up working at it a very long time before you realize this aspect of its becoming. Forty years it's taken me to put it into words. Much longer, of course, should you consider the possibility of reincarnation. And since I do, there's no real telling how long it has taken. Likely, many possibilities must come together to create one. The will, the wanting, the longing, the patience to name a few. And I will remind each of you that what I am referring to as God, or rather who, has gone by many names and exists the same to each of us in our mind's eye, is my guess. But who could ever pin a cap on that, my friends.



Morning Worshiper II: True Blue, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 36 x 36 inches

## Letting Go

At times, it is so hard to let go of the chaos, it can consume one. But as a painter you must, to enter into that space of creation. One either works out of it or lets it go; the chaos, the turmoil of day to day living. This, one must master. And it is said that the classical artist lets it go and the romantic channels it. I let it go most of the time. The space I create from must be pure and easy. Like a solitary bird chirping a beautiful song, one of distress at times, but in a beautiful tone, with a rhythm, with the pulse of life. An enchantment for others to ponder. A mysterious longing and pulling. A longing and pulling for real communication. Authentic communication. Real communication.

## Leveling Up: Mobility and the Artist

*“It is impossible to make my portrait because of my mobility. I am not photogenic because of my mobility.”*

—Anais Nin, from a letter she wrote to the editor, *Leo, of Harper’s Bazaar*

The artist is mobile, he and she sits often, but in his mind is mobility, always searching and finding. No, stagnation is not for the artist. Stagnation, above all things, is death to the artist. It saddens her beyond thinking of. And this stagnation occurs when the mind is full of garbage. Somehow, when we are off the line with life, attentive to all the noise surrounding our focus, life is chaotic. So, we retreat into solitude to regain balance, our positivity, and our focus. At this time it is possible to have inspirations, ones that are noticeable as good, inspirations that move us forward into the unknown, into that darkness that always is enlivened and made luminous by us. One step forward is like a feeling of ecstasy in the night, like a positive romance with others. Because we share we are not alone in the feeling of our inspirations. We are mobile and transformative always. Not the same soul from moment to moment, but an ever evolving entity and spirit whom makes constant discoveries and whom through genius and will sets into motion these artful nuances of life. We reflect on life and its essence and through our mind’s eye we detach momentarily to get the essence down on canvas or paper or in writing or in science. We seek to understand our results, and they, our results, guide us on frequently to our next endeavor. Our next idea or thought, or inspiration, so long as the distractions are not there, will be of beauty. For, truth is what guides us and truth is a microscopic nugget of inspiration sitting one meter from our brains always, ever elusive, except when one is not distracted. And when one focuses on the truth it becomes us. We are invigorated by it! We understand it as being accurate and an essence because we feel positive in its discovery no matter if it is a brunt truth. It compels us onward and upward into a new stratum, where we are bound to again feel distracted and therefore unmotivated, but where we will again push forward, always!

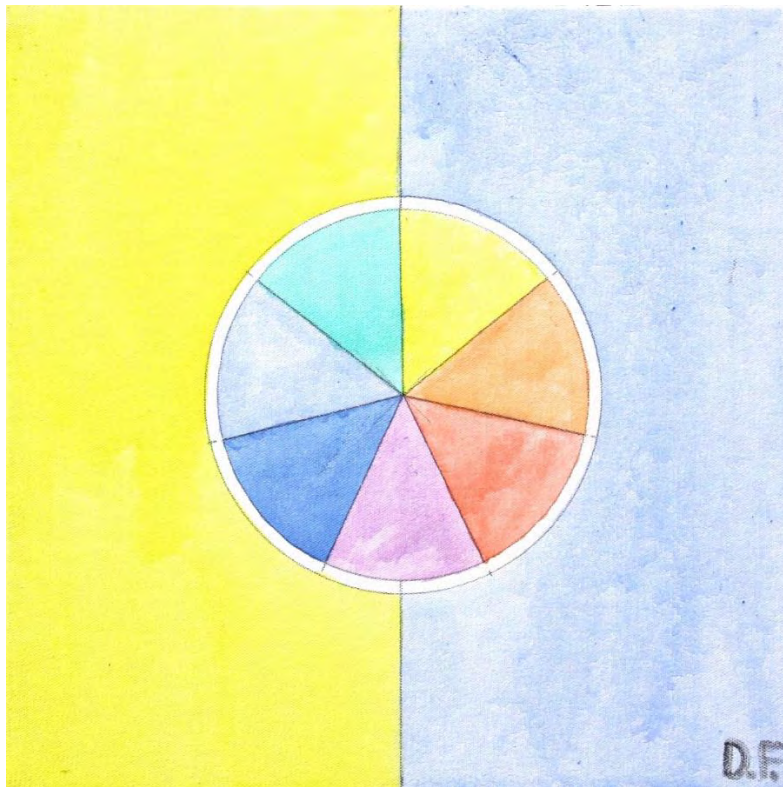
## Life and Art

Art doesn't represent life. It presents and enriches it in the most thoughtful and imaginative ways. Life is life and art is art and not to see the difference between them is to have been naïve as I have been. Yet, the confusion of things may be art's finest worth?

### Light: Depicting or Presenting?

There are two ways a painter can give back to the viewer in terms of light. One is to depict light like Vermeer did in paintings demonstrating the illusion of or realistic illustration of the effects of light. The other way is to present light, or to use highly saturated colors and tinted colors that reflect light back to the viewer. Of course, paintings do both but remain to this day realistic, abstract, or nonobjective. Realism is concerned with the depiction of light, abstraction is concerned with both the depiction and the presentation of light, and nonobjective art is concerned with the presentation of light.

In the paintings I try to present light, not to depict it. At times, in my representational work I illustrate lighting effects. But, as for the nonobjective work, it's presented.



Inspiration #53: Love Letter, for Betsy Baker, 2022, Graphite and Acrylic on Canvas, 15 x 15 inches



## Love

In all activities of life, we seem to be investing in creation. We, as artists, are at base one. But so too is every man and woman whom bare a child. Every man and woman: straight, homosexual, biracial, foreign, domestic, of any other race than your own whom lives, is invested in love. We protect our children, we care for those of others; our siblings, and parents, and even strangers. We live life on the wings of today. And this is love. Moment to moment loving with every part of who we are.

As artists, we create, but not only people, things. We invent languages to communicate with. The material is charged with inner life. The paint is transmuted, a substance by which we invest thought and emotion. It is alive. It lives, the paintings do.

Brice Marden tells a story about a piece in a museum protected by Plexiglass to keep it safe from visitors to that museum. The artwork is beneath Plexi. The Plexi eventually cracked so they put new Plexi around the piece to protect it again. It cracked again, and has done so several times, and they keep replacing the Plexiglas. It makes you wonder?

He also tells a story about two bordering towns in Europe or someplace where one town turned a painting of the patron saint of the next town upside down. This seems ample proof of the power of artwork to communicate.

I remember being a student at State Fair Community College, in my hometown of Sedalia, Missouri. I painted a painting called, "Buried Flag." The painting was of a large flag buried underneath brushwork and drips and geometric shapes (various rectangles and squares), but you could still see vestiges of the flag beneath the burgundy paint drips. Some of the military veterans in town were angry about the work. They left negative statements about the painting in the comments book I had left in the gallery. One comment was positive.

I realize now – the power of the painting to allow for the veterans to speak up, to voice their troubles with it, their concerns. It was the first time I had painted a painting of that scale with recognizable imagery such as something as iconic as the flag. I laughed. I was somewhat naïve then.

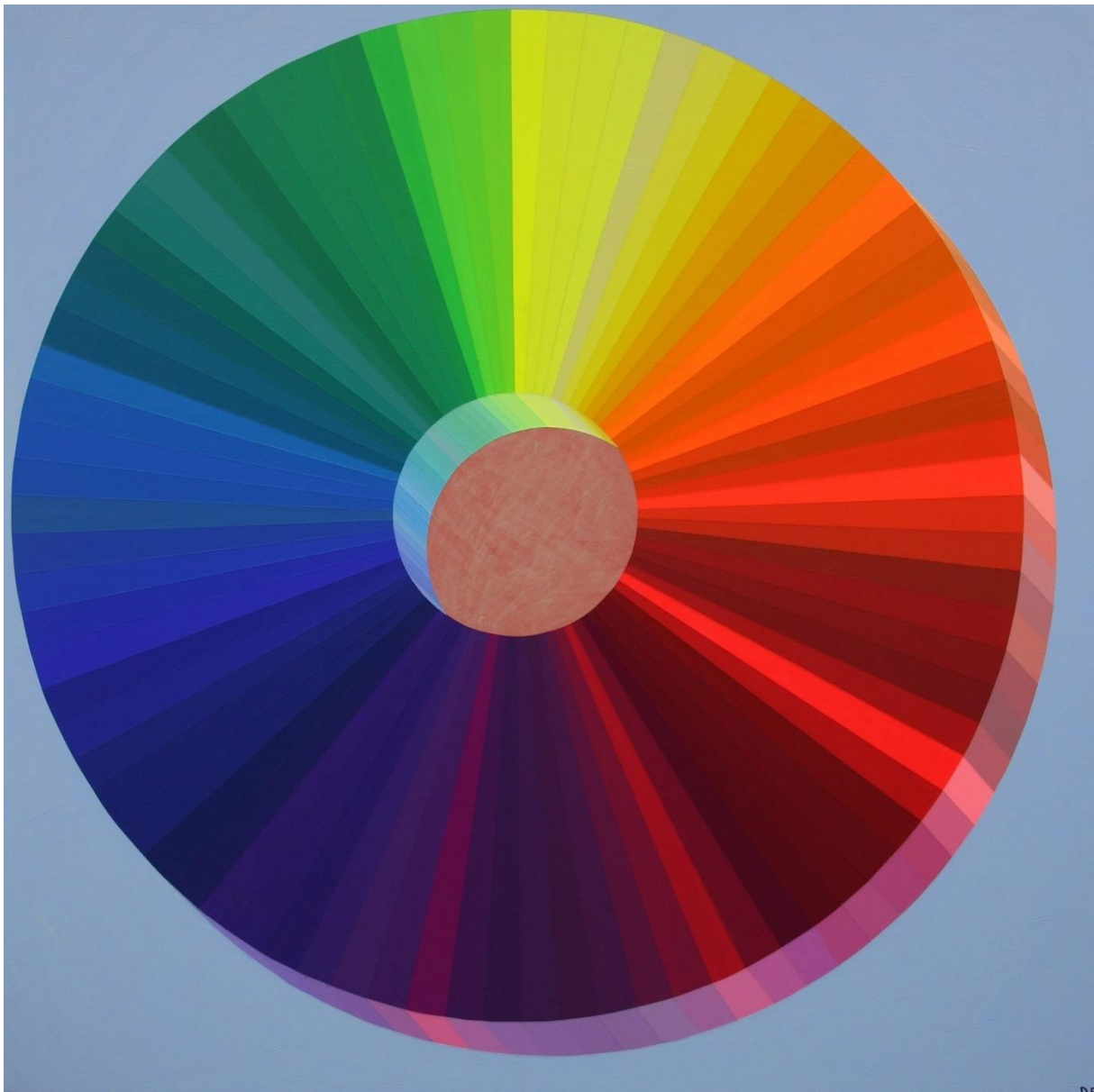
Now, it's not so funny. Now, maybe the painting gave those wounded by it a voice, or perhaps the painting was not all they were outraged about, perhaps it was their stance in the world that they were able to voice in message form, to myself. Anyhow, it's quite a positive vehicle for expression, painting, at least it can be, it allows people to vent. After all, I've not forgotten. We have a responsibility. A definite responsibility to others when we go to display our work. We need to be cognizant about this as artists and people, and we need to do our best to remember this.

And I ask myself, this painting, was it from a place of love or antagonism that I created it? My painting, well, it was from both. I remember I wanted it to be provocative, mostly. So, it was at first a love for my flag and my country. I remember loving the flag as I worked on it. It was also

love for myself as a member of this country and of my freedom within this country, who, in a way, can stand apart from all that government and responsibility.

And I received a couple of viewpoints in response to my painting: It caused trouble and some loved it, therefore, it caused myself trouble and I loved it also, the painting, and the antagonism, the attention. But mostly, I loved them back, the people for speaking their mind about it.

I just loved to work, to be a painter, to get the chance and opportunity to display my paintings before the public. Overall, it was out of love, and that love is still there. So, when I go to display my paintings next time, I will be more aware of this. And I will love it!



The Spectral Wheel of Colors-Moon, 2020, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

## **Love and Art: The Natural Man**

The Conqueror and the passivist seem to be on equal footing. The conqueror will always destroy the passivist and he will never heal. Tormented he is, by his longing for peaceful action. And longing is the passivist, for strength in aggression!

This battle of aggression versus wit seems played out when we look to Mark Rothko's paintings and Clyfford Still's. The craggy and roughened ledges of Still's painted surfaces and Mark Rothko's smooth buffered edges flat and infinite as could be seem at odds in one respect, yet likeminded in other ways. Each has a working method suited to their sensibilities as human beings. Rothko imploded in the end though, committing suicide for unknown reasons. Whereas Clyfford Still didn't. And though I prefer Rothko's work 10 times over that compared to Still's, I have respect for both them and their work. The difference to me is this, Rothko gave his life for it. For Art. In the End.

But Still found his voice earlier than Rothko did. So, who's to say?

What I can say is this; the natural man, ebbing and flowing, neither conqueror nor passivist, might win out both ways! So be yourself.

Rothko still resonates though, from every corner of my soul. Weeping this way and that, enveloping my whole being. It's a shame really, to think the world can be so cruel. I don't know, perhaps he was cruel? Perhaps the world surrounding him was, merely. I'll never know. Deep down though, in my body and mind – we can all aspire to such great heights! His love was deeper.

And time, well, we shall see how exactly fickle it is. For I have loved with all my heart.

And Agnes Martin comes to mind, now. Someone who carried on the flame and love of the older way. We shall see. We shall see!

For what are we all if not for our past. Belief is this. And what is it that you believe in? I for one in the future. And Love. Myself.

I suppose I'm more like Newman, Barnett. In my way!

**Love and Neglect – December 25th 2007 – May 24th 2018**

Love and neglect guide the actions of man. I cannot fairly say what compels woman. What I will say is, do not neglect your duties at home, and I state this for both men and women. Love unites the two. Marriage constitutes them. Home enacts man and woman. The balance between love and neglect is a precarious one. When in balance, the country is bounding with positivity, when out of balance, the home is flooded with negative thoughts, and the country approaches disarray.

When the country's government is corrupted with lies it also approaches disarray. We are learning this first hand, with the chaos the current administration has brought to the people. Real battles are being fought on the ground, and it's not good. It's haphazard and there will be a bizarre and more dangerous time ahead if we don't get control of it. A time when we as a nation must be stronger than before, stronger than in days past, and quickly, or I fear what's to come. A government needs structure to run well. Like any good painting structure is needed. We are losing the structure; the outer supports are falling. We must as a country rise to meet this structure with open hands and be willing to lift up and to give help where and when need be. It is not a time to be trivial. It is not a time to be biased left and right. It is a time to come together when needed and to do it well.



Detail of Love and Neglect, 2002

### **Love, Among Other Things**

It is a great pleasure of mine to read philosophy, to take it in, and to reflect on it, and to correct it as I see it to be. Some writers of philosophy are in tandem with my sense of life, i.e.— at times, the philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Dewey, and Agnes Martin. Brice Marden's philosophy of painting is intriguing to me as well as his words offered on painting, at times, as well.

Now, having just read a full chapter, "Philosophy and Sense of Life," from Ayn Rand's book, "The Romantic Manifesto," I would like to add to it my corrections personal to my own life. As well, I would like to remark on it with what I enjoyed about it.

First, I would like to begin in a negative fashion, as, my first judgement of her writing came after reading this sentence... “The mind leads, the emotions follow.” This, to myself, strikes me in reverse of real life. It is my experience and understanding in life that our emotional responses are initiated first by a sensory exterior or interior charge to our self; the body and mind recognizes the sensory (prettiness or ugliness) simultaneously and it is qualified first by our emotional responses. Mental reasoning weighs our emotional responses on a scale between positive and negative in value thereby the emotions provide the mind with evidence for decision making. We tend to go with the positive or should depending upon how aware we are at a given time. I praise her, Ayn Rand, for at least having a stance on this. Her mind got the best of her at times, it seems.

On the other hand, personally, I find this passage on love from Ayn Rand to be beautiful! “One falls in love with the embodiment of the values that formed a person’s character, which are reflected in his widest goals or smallest gestures, which create the *style* of his soul—the individual style of a unique, unrepeatable, irreplaceable consciousness.” Even still, I can find fault in it. We fall in love with the person whom exhibits values first, *and then* with the values they exhibit.

Furthermore, she goes on to write... “Love is *the expression of philosophy*—of a subconscious philosophical sum—and, perhaps, no other aspect of human existence needs the *conscious* power of philosophy quite so desperately. Wherein I agree with her. When that power is called upon to verify and support an emotional appraisal, when love is a conscious integration of reason and emotion, of mind and values, then—and only then—it is the greatest reward of man’s life.” Here, it would seem that she gets it, that emotion is the lead in love when she makes the statement “[...] to verify and support an emotional appraisal [...]. Here, “the emotional appraisal,” appears to be made first of that initial charge I mentioned earlier, of which I have always experienced first *in* love.

## **Love and War**

If for love I be called a traitor, then so be it. And if I am ahead in my heart then so be it. For love and love alone I would not lift a finger, not to fight. For in the name of love it isn’t done. It is out of pride that men ride into the dark night. And I will not fight. So call me a traitor, but one sees his face in the day and mine is clearly my own. I wear on my head not a crown nor do I sit atop a throne. Not above some golden seat and this love I do not own. Possession must be given up. No man whom ever drank from a humble cup ever lived his life by possessing. And no man ever cried his heart to sleep, except when it was her by his side. For we are not some ancient tribe nor are we a united people. So at last I shed not a lonesome tear at bedtime, and not one in the day.



## Love Incarnated

I love the world and it loves me. The representational work is fun, I like it. But there is another kind of work that I would like to tell you about. The nonobjective. When I paint representationally I have fun, it's more or less easy to do. I like it, but the abstract is more difficult. As artists, we know this to be true. We go inward. We paint the love for the world. I paint my love for our world. You see, one must do their best in this world and my best is this. I go inward and all that I ever loved goes with me and out again in an abstracted form. A quiet form. Sometimes a loud form. An exclusive form of love for all of the world, the endeavor. Life. The endeavor.



Inspiration #13: The Good Snake, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 60 x 60 inches



Inspiration #14: The Good Snakes, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 60 x 60 inches

### **Men and Women of the World**

Anyone that makes something new only breaks something else is perhaps the stupidest help that I ever heard offered in a song. By a status quo musician, nevertheless. We build on the past. We do not break it. I much prefer, on the backs of giants. And that's the way it goes in my world. Heroes are we. And if you don't get that, there's not much that will make you see how I believe.

You must have optimism in people, in the past, in history. Look to the parts that are uplifting, not to the dredge of competition. To the good old ways that need improvement. And see what you



can do to help! And not by breaking something. And the abyss might be staring right back, but that's the truth in your face, and I promise it helps to guide you along if you turn away in time. Have strength, my friends. Be good. It is a catchy tune.

### **Meta-Strips, My Charcoal Drawings**

When I select images for my drawings, I use both free association and a planned attempt to convey a clear narrative. I glean images online and do my own photo shoots. Once I find and select the images I need to draw from I then use a tracing method to transcribe details from the images onto the paper. My process is a combination of conscious and subconscious decision making to create a unified drawing. The dreamlike quality found in some of the drawings, such as in the Meta-strips, is an allegorical phenomenon that occurs out of the fluidity and sensuality between two opposing processes of anonymity and logic. Simply put, it is the symbolic effect of seamlessly combined images that appear entirely unrelated with those that appear meaningfully combined. In this sense, when attempting to read the drawings linearly, we experience something akin to a conversation that does not move from A to B, but from A to Z to M and then to B.

My thinking and feeling is mirrored in the strips. The way the content reads in the strips is akin to Symbolism in art. Yet, I am not using color in the same way. The look of the strips is perhaps, at times, related to M.C. Escher's work and to other Surrealists, but, I have little use for their methods of incorporating automatism or chance techniques into my drawings. Above all they are more aesthetically related to film techniques and storyboarding techniques. Time, in the drawings, seems to unfold both loosely and tightly through psychological dramas and mysteries. Using a personal narrative that is suggestive of my inner thought and emotion, I try to convey different meanings through each strip.



Sleep, 2002, Charcoal and Acrylic on Paper, 12 x 98 inches



Love & Neglect, 2002, Charcoal and Acrylic on Paper, 12 x 98 inches

## **Money**

Some people in this world want money. They want it above all things. They are willing to lose relationships for it. Their family suffers, their children, and their friends, because they make it the priority. They are blind to life and are the most self-centered and self-destructive type of individuals you will meet. Well, life has another thing in store for them. They will continue to fail until they realize what the destructive force is. Ego. Ego is the destructive force. Adjustment takes place in drastic falls to them. Like a bat hitting them upside the dome time and time again, they lose. Until, one day, they make the decision to find help. To seek the help needed. And this help comes in different forms. But, until they are willing to help themselves by accepting the help, they will continue to lose.

It frustrates me when I stick my head out to help these types of people. I've done it time and time again. No longer can I go on losing. You see, passivity is good, but be strong when dealing with these people. Cut them off if they continually take advantage of your ways. Don't go down the rabbit hole with them, surely you will suffer, then.

## **Money and Morals**

Why do we charge so much as artists for a painting or artwork? Because artwork is free to view in most cases, for those who are poor. Those who can afford the artwork are those in need of moral lessons the most, most of the time. So, we charge them for them. Therefore, the artists remain poor and benefit from riches from time to time, and the wealthy remain rich and benefit from us from time to time. Both are satisfied in the end if dedicated to each other. We to their morality, them to our survival as artists.

And I don't mean to say that as artists we have it all figured out, there is much left to be done in our realm. In the moral realm. But with an immaterial view one can accomplish much. So, trust in us to investigate what is right and what is wrong. Our job is this: in the light we receive our orders and with the light we try to create what we and others will perceive as good for everyone. Beauty is this.

We put in the time outside of our day jobs to communicate loss and gain, beauty, enrichment, and enlightenment. So much in this world goes unsaid until an artist says it. So many work and work and work without the time to create or the desire to. As artists, we are dedicated, devoted to, and disciplined in making the time to create. Our hours should not go unmeasured. Our cause of expression should not go unmeasured. We reflect the culture and its needs.

I have been struck by the disgruntlement of friend's desires to purchase my artwork that is too costly for them, as have many of my artist friends. I have traded artwork with artist friends to satisfy our needs. I have given away artwork to those

in need. I have donated artwork to auctions with good causes. I have sold artwork directly. I have sold artwork through my dealers. I am not satisfied, yet. It takes time and rightfully so. As Paul Simon once said in a song of his, "Proof is the bottom line for everyone." You must, as an artist, prove to community the art's worth. The proof at times goes unnoticed for a very long time, but have faith. If it is a worthy cause you may go to your grave unnoticed, I don't know. It happens. Resurgence happens. Acknowledgment of a cause occasionally happens in one's life-time.

My solution to this is to keep working. With or without monetary gain from the cause, from my painting, from my writing. Just keep going and it will come eventually, I feel. It's a positive outlook, naturally. And if we go to our graves underwhelmed by monetary gain, so be it. I do have faith that one day, before or after death, that my cause will go understood. I believe that when the time is right understanding will come to those who deserve it most. Perhaps the same could be said for those who cannot afford the artwork of others, or their own. That one day, if they love it dearly enough, they will be able to receive what they want and might need, as well.



Inspiration #10: The Alpha: 1<sup>st</sup> Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death, 2018, Acrylic and Sand on Canvas, 60 x 60 inches

## **Moonwalk**

I gaze at one key, End, as if to begin again. Yet my course and memory dictates to myself that I must reverse the night's steps to see. So, there I am, rousing that man, talking of points where there are some, but for fun, I pretended there weren't. As he was far too dangerous and old to be dealt with in some serious fashion of endings. He was indeed an ominous and wild character of behavior. Thinking, smiling, all the while I was, and him, oily hair and regrets parched to enter the room through his pointing fingers, and breath of a man who lingers for far too long looking at paintings that are of my own. Yet for display purposes and hanging. Angrily, I wagered my war of words upon his words that night after listening to him say to me, "What are all of these points? And that crusty paint!" In some far reaching and fetching tone, snootily. And this ominous man, who is he? I cannot tell. A rich man? A saint. A patron of his? Yes! By golly, yes he is! A troublemaker, nevertheless!

And what of Barnett Newman and mathematicians. And what of artistes versus true artists? They were there, both of them. And what of rage and backstreets? I drove too long to be castrated and emasculated by women both strong and weak! The lookers – too young, the thinkers – too old, the minds of men not bold enough to hold onto fact and fiction long enough to speak truths – Suspend judgments. Let them go upon the winds. As you leave the place. Or, speak them coherently enough to be judged by the artist, myself! Because, that is what you are risking by being there! So, I say look, and hold your tongues! Walk away if you have nothing to say, but for god's sake, don't say anything at all be it bad!

Because like this – one thing leads to another and the harshest words are saved for last! So, go now, into the wind, you asses. Because, that is surely what I did, at last! At last! At last! Freedom rings on the backstreets of nowhere, to me. Freedom rings, at last! And down Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, I passed! For miles I laid on that gas! And to Vernon Drive I landed, my directions are candid! So, then, I took a right and was headed on a path. One that was my own. And, alone I was. Destiny called, and faith took hold. Doubting is not for the Bold!

## **Move Beyond It**

I was in a discussion in my dream with two men and myself. The others and I were discussing philosophy. I argued that once you have obtained logic and reason that it is with you for life. The others didn't think so. I said you must move beyond logic and reason in this lifetime to see the truth. Logic and reason, or rationale is easiest, it's like riding a bicycle. It's with one until death. Unless one loses motor functioning of the brain, one sees clearly without it.

## Nature's Message

Nature is religion, impresses in all its ways, and to worship a higher power is to have faith in others, so I praise Her. May I be carried to rest, as one! God in the light and in the Earth. Him and the devil, are, as one.



Twonism XXXXIV: Zebra, 2018, Oil on Wooden Panel, 57 5/8 x 17 5/8 inches

## Nonobjective Abstraction and Midwestern Understanding Therein

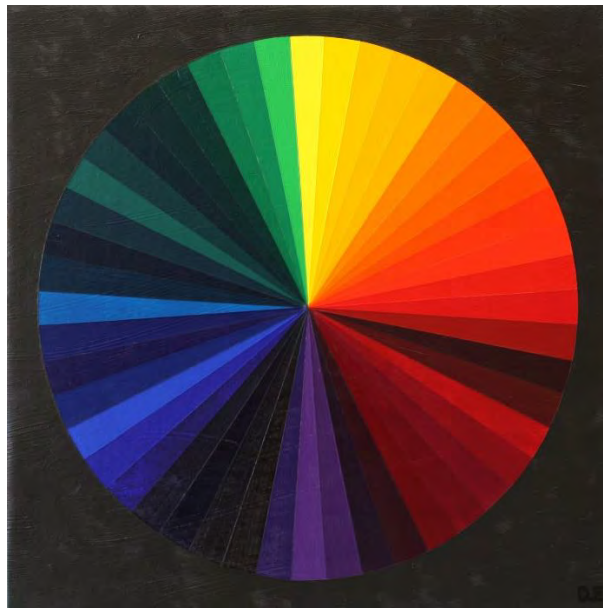
*“Followers of the Way, this Buddha-dharma of mine has come down to me in a very clear line, from Reverend Ma-yu, Reverend Tan-hsia, Reverend Tao-i, and the reverends Lu-shan and Shih-kung, a single road going all over the world. But not a soul believes this, and everyone speaks slanderously of it.”*

Lin-chi, from *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-chi*, translated by Burton Watson

I've come to realize why folks in the Midwest could mostly care less about nonobjective abstraction. They have little interest in it because they know little about it. And that may sound academic, but it's not. It has to do with abstraction's roots in this country. It goes back to New York. That's where abstraction landed in this country and came to be. And to Europe before that, and to the caves and so on.

The second reason and perhaps most profound reason midwestern folk can't identify with abstraction is because they can't qualify its skill. They wouldn't know something progressive or new if it struck them over the head. There are simply few individuals out there with a positive understanding of abstraction in this country. But no matter, I insist on bringing its forms to this part of the land just as my father has.

The problem with nonobjective abstraction is there's just nothing you can say about it. The sensitivity it contains is too subtle for words. This doesn't strike myself as a problem, but it does others.



Earth, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 27 x 27 inches

## Notes on Architecture

“We must learn to restructure our environment which in turn exercises our minds.”

Jack Whitten, from *Notes from the Woodshed*



I had a thought recently. It occurred to me the exterior structure of architectural dwellings! A new idea about them! I was driving down 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in my hometown where the Catholic Church resides. Well, the outside appeared to me in a new way I had not seen prior. Then, it later occurred to me the difference between viewing and experiencing. You see, there exists a difference on the inside, and out! We, at least I, experience the simultaneous outward and inside experiences together! In the past, it was difficult to tell the differences between them! As, we seemingly experience what the thing is made of and how it is built together! But, consider this. The experience is subjective to the viewer, versus a more objective viewing of it! For a moment's time, imagine the inside as separate, from the outsides. Ask the question to Architecture, has this been done before.

Who are the architects who have worked this way? The integration of the outside and inside, we know, has been done before. And if we pick up where Frank Lloyd Wright left off, it is still the same. A certain depth of feeling, I imagine, is gained working in the way that he did. A synchronicity of the insides with the outsides, particularly with his envisioning of the outsides, nature, through framed architecture, namely through looking through windows. So what's the next step? Well, many have come after him, already.

So who are they, and what are they doing exactly! In my limited knowledge of architecture, Frank Gehry comes to mind, as a force to be reckoned with. His elaborate ship like design of the museum in Bilbao Spain and other places, brings sails from a boat, to mind. His architecture, also brings to mind a certain look. A style of his own. And, the insides ARE different quite dramatically in form than the outside, at least in his architecture in Spain.

Now, an older example I know of is that of Antoni Gaudi's architecture in Spain. His Basilica de la Sagrada Familia, in Barcelona, as well as his Guell Park is architecture at its very best! In gazing upon these structures myself nearing graduation at a younger age I was there to see them.

They were beyond any form I had seen in the West. Way beyond. And remain as such. So, my question to students of architecture is do you want to be more of an urban planner on the engineering side of things with *architecture*, or do you want to be a *designer* of architecture? *The artist, so to speak?*

It will take a whole lotta guts going this way, the latter way. It will take charisma, and leadership, *and* Creativity to its extreme! It will take everything you have to offer the world if you go this way, but maybe, the world needs it from us.

Difficult to know, at this time!

### **Obstacle and Void – June 27, 2007**

When looking at the shapes there is an ordered way of seeing. First you see the hard edge then you see the soft center. Taoists referred to this way of thinking as “perception of the nature of things. Soft and weak overcome hard and strong.” Those who only see hard edges are attracted to



strength. Those who only see soft centers are attracted to weakness. To perceive the soft, overcome the hard. This is why I call the hard edge the obstacle and the soft brushwork the void. Those who seek distraction linger on the hard edge; those who seek clarity linger in the soft middle. Recognize weakness and gain strength, recognize strength and gain weakness. Be too proud and fall, be too weak and rise. Recognize both hard and soft, strength and weakness, then see them turn into each other and be able bodied. With some effort this person utilizes the nature of East and West, and of all things.

## **Obstacle and Voids Series**

Firstly, the inspiration comes. From my own experience. This inspiration is tied to a spiritual place from within of deeply resonating color harmonies. Then, aesthetically, I work it out compositionally and color-wise! The work is involved with science; experimentally, I move forward. All these aspects come together in these pieces. I call them Obstacle and Voids.

Because of their connection to my thinking! Spatially, that is. I do not recognize them as being in a tradition of space. The space I have found is new! Upon successful constructions, it is there! Now you may be thinking me naive because of past paintings. But I assure, my viewers, that they are not! You might think me arrogant in saying as much, but I am not! The marks sit on the surfaces of the paintings and are painted on top of, therefore you go into the fabric of the pieces, the surrounds. The color penetrates the fabric with a palette knife process! I press the pure colors into the weave of canvases with my palette knives!

My very first profound experience with an artwork was in my Father's studio. I stood, before the tragedy of death. Brown and black, weeping forward. Inward, I was. Moving, as if into an abyss of thought; felt expression encased within two structures – brown on the left – black on the right. Yet, there was modulation! Deeply and near rusts! The encounter was spiritually felt at a young age, I was 7, maybe. I mean it, I remember a drawing at the age of 4 that I did, angered at my Parents! But my experience was different... it was not me this time. At least it was not me looking, drawing, and expressing from within myself. This was ages of wisdom weeping out from within this painting. And it was my, Dad's. Years of torture was in that thing. The trauma of it was akin to this kind of felt experience!

Now, here I am, doing my own thing. I find in myself his weight, and I am here in this painting. I stumbled across it, deliberately, my own incarnation of work. Divisions of tone... bridging each other, reaching across the divisions of color; richly, deeply; vibrations nearing on sound, to me! Part of me thinks they look cheap, like rip-offs from the past, structurally, but they are not! They are resonating with me on a much deeper level than anything I have painted. I have reached out my hand, to the past!

So, in them, they are there. Old ghosts of wisdom. Yet, I have my own way of working with the colors. The spiritual part in them reaches back to the caves – and back! To my Parents – and back! Through eons of paintings. To the Chinese, even. Whom created their system of colors, red, black, green, orange, yellow, and white. Violet and blue, too. In my book on color, you

would find my understandings written down in the book. There is a section in the book on my paintings about the Obstacle coming forth into the viewer's vision and the voids receding. The two do not interchange. But they do jump across spatially in this new body of works! Color resonates between dashes of mark making with the brush. Leverage with the palate knife... a fine touch and a medium one. All this goes into the paintings with ease now! I just work. I get up, have a couple cups of coffee, and am on my way to the studio.

## **On Distraction**

What are these things; cigarettes and booze, they are but fetishes in this lifetime. Mere decoys of bad behavior. But really what are they? They are but nothing. And what of their impediment? I say they are like the wind, they exist, but not everyday is windy.

## **On Drawing from Reference**

I no longer worry about duplication when drawing. The piece must have a life of its own to speak of. I'm always telling my students, you must depart from your reference, whether that is from direct observation or from a photograph, to achieve a fully developed drawing. The piece must stand on its own. There is the beauty of the landscape you are observing, which is one kind of beauty, and there is the beauty of your expression of that landscape. Emerson understood this very well when he stated, "In landscapes the painter should give the suggestion of a fairer creation than we know. The details, the prose of nature he should omit and give us only the spirit and splendor. [...] he will come to value the expression of nature and not nature itself, and so exalt in his copy the features that please him."

Use nature as a basis for form, shape, light, color, and line, but express that which is not needed and exemplify that which is. This is how my work becomes ignited alive. Subtlety begins to play its part and the unknown character and essences of nature begin to excite us. The drawing becomes less a representation of nature than nature itself. The experience of viewing a picture drawn in this way is unquantifiable to the eye, for we can't and don't recognize the usual tricks and formalities.

## **On Education**

Money, it's actually easy to make money. Serving people, working with other's ideas is how one makes money! Now, you wonder why the art world is making money, because originality is truly scarce. And the art world should deal in originality more often!

I listened to this guy in an online video earlier talk about how antiquated the education system is. Well, he was right, but it's not all of the time and certainly not why he said it is. He claimed it's outdated because the education system was built on predilections for money for information.

When the internet wasn't around you would go to school, pay for school, to gain the right information. Sounds good, doesn't it? Well, what he left out, likely to perfect his system of thought, thereby allowing for himself to be seen as confident and to make more money, is this part! Information will never travel faster, be more enlightening, richer, worthwhile than when experienced - In person. Meaning, one on one within the classrooms is a way to get it. Even still. True discoveries happen in discussion and in person. The internet deals in ideas, our people, in inspiration. Ideas reside on the surfaces and inspirations below the surfaces! It is necessary that a school be up to date on technological information and advancement. And above all, on hiring good and honest instructors! Then you will be serving the right students at that time.

### **On Finding Feeling: The New York City Years, 2000-2007, for Zack and Betsy, and Tiffany and Kevin.**

*"When religion, science, and morals (the latter by the strong hand of Nietzsche) are shaken and when the outer supports threaten to fall, man turns his gaze from the external to the deeper essence within him. Literature, music, and art are the first sensitive spheres in which this spiritual revolution makes itself felt, in the form of reality. These spheres reflect immediately the dark picture of the present; they feel the immensity of what, at first, was a minute point of light noticed by few and ignored by the vast majority.*

*These spheres reflect the great darkness which, at first, was barely indicated. Gradually, they dim and darken. Yet, on the other hand, they approach those substances and forms which strive freely in the non-material search and which survive even in the darkest soul."*

—Wassily Kandinsky, from *On the Spiritual in Art*, 1911

### **The School of Visual Arts –**

It was a time of exploration. A time of innocence. A time for thinking and feeling . . .

It came in different ways. Through others. Through space. We had it. We all had it. There, at the School of Visual Arts. Us students. We had it. And my class was exceptional and so was another. Two beneath mine. It started here. We began like any other class. Apart and then separate and then together. We studied the art of one another's and of our instructors. We had it all and it had us.

My senior year it was amazing Greg Edwards was a nearly dedicated student and I was dedicated. I chose him for my studio mate at the School of Visual Arts our senior year. He accepted the challenge. We shared a space together. He was an exceptional thinker and I a thinker and feeler. Matthew Boerio was our friend who loved Vermeer and he was a conduit from Florida. He was my brilliant friend. A great and devoted friend, and kind. Then there was Anna – A Japanese American hipster who made art. Good art. I loved her. I loved them all. But my friend Zack was my very best friend out of all of them. He planted the seed in the first place

to go to SVA and he was and is highly intelligent. A great best friend! Yet, likely, the credit is due to my dad. Our friendships began long ago, at an early start.

Zack's class was below mine, but he was friends with most of those students and us, and so it was a union.

As it was, our search for thinking and feeling was on. And there was a great effort and comradery among the students and myself to find it. We went places together; to the galleries, to the museums; to eat, to drink, and to play. We found it everywhere in that city. Every nook and cranny was evidence of being alive. But we found it in the shadows most of all, at least I did. The places where only I dared to go searching. And, it opened our eyes!

There were performances, music, playing, painting, sculpture, conceptual things, ordinary things, and art, a great amount of art to look at. Every last one of us was searching for the new. Our best and our newest form and idea of what it was to be alive. So, we found it, and what it was to be alive.

I remember mostly smoking cigs outside our building on 21<sup>st</sup> near the Chelsea galleries where I would occasionally participate in a smoke or two with Zack and my friends. But, also we would sneak cigarettes inside.

My senior year I had a breakthrough. I created a long charcoal drawing, a Meta-strip, that ebbed and flowed with realistic looking figurative aspects, in and out of dark crevasses and lit spaces. Within a two-inch-tall by eight feet long narrative was a getaway, an escape, a becoming, a letting go, an arrival, a sexiness too. It happened in a class on the third floor of our building overlooking the city. We would eat Pop Tarts and Pepsi and smoke cigarettes out the windows of the painting class when no one was around. When it was just us, the ones most dedicated. It was a great freedom. And I, I was on top of my game. And when others viewed my drawing they knew I had broken through and found something of meaning. Great meaning!

It worked. The drawing did. It was a compelling and scary convoluted story, a drawing for the ages with surreal notes. And I don't have it now, I donated it when I got home, but I wish I did. I went on to make others in the same style but I'm missing the original one. The one that landed me respect with all the other students at that time. Anyhow, I miss it, the drawing. It was tinted blue. And to this day I have made more, and one is currently waiting in the wings.

And others were making fantastic paintings. And others even still were making fantastic installations. And we would occasionally go check out the upperclassman's work to see what they were making but it was mostly too polished for us to be looking at, and too slick. We weren't there yet. Not ready to make our stand. But I did. And it was beautiful. And others did also, as individuals – together.

All the while, we listened to music while we worked, most of the greatest music was coming out into the scene, there. It began with, God Speed! You Black Emperor. Their first album. Their album from two thousand made it to us shortly thereafter I began my drawings. It was from a Canadian group. They pushed the envelope for the time. It was mostly instrumental, a nine piece

if I remember their band correctly. In two-thousand two I saw them live for the first time, after their second album began. I went alone into the city that night. Their first album is raw emotion mixed with talking, soundbites between instrumentals. It begins light and ends light. It was raw emotion and a narrative into darkness, the unknown. And they went there to find something. Feeling. Emotion. Tranquility. Somewhat soothing and edgy notes of similitude gracefully played on our ears. Notes that are notes but were an indication of something on the horizon. A darkness weighing heavy. A spookiness. Perhaps an intruder that was 9/11. It was a mirror to the culture at the time. So it is difficult to tell, and they accomplished this how? Through both nonobjective and objective means in music and soundbites.

Then, one morning I woke up to David Schwab, my roommate, waking myself up from sleep on the morning of September 11, 2001, after having been up late into the morning hours the night prior with my friend Zack. We went down to the landing on the New Jersey City shoreline, where I would go on my walks occasionally, and it was tragic. Jason, my other ex-roommate was there also, and Dave and I, together, we watched. A blaze, smoke, the buildings collapsing. From that point on we were changed. The city had changed. We had changed. Then it was over.

And into the darkness we went deeper, and into the darkness of that city we stayed for a time. But we were alive and older, much, much, older then, in ways. Tracy and Desiree loved us then, our team to stay alive, and they joined in at times. And we made it out, alive. And we kept making art. We did our best with the tragedy then, and with Dave's all-night plans to stay on the town then.

And so, we partied. There were good times, too! And much, much mourning of death.

The rest is history, mostly. And a very dark history it was, but not all of it. My sister and her husband Kevin came to New York the year after, and we discovered Betsy also. Amongst it all there was hope. I found her walking up to me, Betsy. Walking into a new year at the School of Visual Arts where I was a Resident Assistant. I greeted her and her father and checked her into the school, the housing, mostly, but my eyes were on her mostly, she was beautiful, and still is.

And so it was an awakening and a discovery! Her and I danced for a time. And it was fun. But it had to taper off because she moved home. And thus, I was alone. Again.

And all the while we were dancing some of the best music to come out was aping in through friends and myself at school. The second album by, God Speed! You Black Emperor, came out. And shortly thereafter the legendary album by Interpol, "Turn on the Bright Lights" came out. And we danced some more, in a darker way. But we were there. I went to two of there shows. The bravado moments of Carlos D, ala Chuck D, and the brooding of Paul Banks made quite a duo on stage, each of them dressed in their classical black suits with white collared button-up shirts.

Television and Joy Division was penetrating everything at the time, including Interpol's music. But, it was a new sound for the time and they pushed it further into the unknown like all good bands should do when it's their time. Then, Blonde Redhead dropped an album. "Melody of Certain Damaged Lemons" was noteworthy. The band's fifth studio album moved through the

scene quickly and took hold, but was released in June of two thousand. Perhaps it hit us late, but it did hit us. And there was other music, such as Belle and Sebastian around that time, but the bouncy irony of the lyrics never attracted me as much. Animal Collective was working on their music as well, a banshee beat with origins from ancient times past. Modest Mouse's two thousand album, "The Moon and Antarctica" was also poignant and meaningful at the time. As well as several Built to Spill records and The Strokes albums. Anyhow, it was all so rich and vivid black, crushed velvet black. A beautiful time, and I made incredible friends, life-long friends during that time. And ol' Betsy and I still talk, but not frequently, and I visit with my roommates on occasion, also. Oh, what a time it was, and still is!

### **The Hunter College Years –**

After my depression of losing her and after graduation I was lost. I trudged through the mud though all the while beforehand and applied to Hunter College, City University of New York. It was tough times. I was accepted for drawings I had made while at SVA. Meanwhile, I was job searching and landed a good job as a preparator at David Findlay Jr. gallery in uptown New York. I locked down a loft space in Brooklyn prior to getting the job where I eventually set up my studio and built, from the ground up, an apartment to live in. Zack, Jefferey LoCascio, and Amanda Elliott were my first roommates. Amanda worked a job at Max Protetch gallery in Chelsea before she knew what she wanted to do with her life, professionally. The summer after Betsy and I broke it off Amanda stayed with me in Manhattan. We were on again at that time. It was then that we decided she should move to New York and that she should be roommates with us. It was always rocky with her. I knew it was a risky position to be in. But, we made the best of it. We weren't physically involved, her and I at the time, it was necessary for our learning. Anyhow, we moved slowly.

I was focused mainly on school at the time, on classwork and my job. I worked and worked and worked. So did Amanda. I was consumed by it all. I couldn't be in a relationship due to the time it took away from myself, it was painful not to be as well. So, we ended our relationship most of all.

At that point, Jeff moved out and I told Amanda to leave, so she moved out, but we didn't agree to it. So she left me. But it was a difficult decision because I loved her as a friend and I knew I was losing our relationship.

Plus, Betsy and I were on and off again, mixed emotions at the time. It was difficult when I would see her. But, it was always pleasant with her in mind. Tiffany and Kevin would come and visit occasionally. We saw one another frequently during the time. I would visit them frequently as well. It was beautiful.

## **On Finishing a Painting**

On finishing a painting: One not dilly dally in thought about this. Forget not the single most important and first symbol of Pythagoras. 1. Go not beyond the balance.

## **On Love**

Experience before understanding. Attraction before profound love. Let understanding come next, after attraction and experience. Never the cart before the horse. For what does the cart know of instinct and the trail. In love, you must lead with instincts. And in love, it is not friendship, but love that guides the intimate horse. A friendship is developed, of course, but it takes time in love to be friends.

## **On Malevich's Tendency Toward Nature**

*"The human being observes in nature the unconscious, "disorderly" activity of the elements and seeks to arrange this in conformity with the "lawfulness" of his consciousness."*

—Kazimir Malevich, from *The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism*, 1959  
(originally published in 1915)

In the above quotation there is morality. Malevich seems to understand it as the orderly conduct of artists while composing. And our results reveal this conscious conduct. And at times it is expressed in a subconscious manner at which time our base consciousness is revealed. Composition, shape, and color organization are the three main forces of morality in my nonobjective and representational works. But, in this quote Malevich is disregarding nature's other beings as not having their own consciousness and ways of organizational thinking, the difference is obvious, and his statement lacks humility. Of course, as I have stated in other notes, this I believe to be false, as we know it to be false. We are a part of nature and not outside of it but within it. Therefore, while we might manicure and organize the Earth, we are not the only ones and Nature certainly has a way of fighting back to tell us, when enough is enough!





*Zero Game*, after Kazimir Malevich's Statement, "It is from zero, in zero, that the new movement of being begins." 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 27 x 27 inches

### **On My Abstractions**

When I paint abstractly my paintings are inspired. What I mean by this is that my process is internal. I see a vision of which I sketch out. An abstracted vision. Usually, what I perceive to be the inspiration comes to me in grey and is a structure of proportions on which the color comes afterwards. But sometimes the inspiration is in color, a colored grid. A tiny sketch or drawing is made at that time. Once the sketch is finished, I work out the size in my head and write it down.

Perhaps the sketch leads to a sudden inspiration of color that also gets written down. From that point forward I prepare to paint.

***“Nature must not win the game but she cannot lose.”***

—Carl Gustav Jung, 1875-1961

“Nature vs. Culture, sounds good, but really it’s the same thing. Perhaps, Nature and Culture, is better to me, but paradigms of thinking come forth in opposite relationships, don’t they? So, if we take this to be true, which I do not. Man is an idea, and women, the same to them. That’s why I say, inspiration is key. Love. And to be loved.”

—Damon Freed

## **On Nature**

7/24/04

I remember clearly feeling that the two worlds I had known finally came to peace with each other during the 2003 blackout in New York City. Until that point I was at odds with the city. It was comforting knowing that nature was always present, even in its absence. Its incomprehensible strength could stop civilization without warning. It was on that night that I could look up at the stars over Manhattan and feel at home. I did this from the middle of 4<sup>th</sup> street in my hometown every night in the summer just before going to bed. I enjoyed the feeling that the world (nature-the universe) was so much larger and more powerful than myself. During the time of the blackout I was reading a lot of Virilio and his essays on speed, such as Pure War. I began to negotiate the idea of speed within myself and I gained a better understanding after the blackout. I think this moment surfaced many ideas for me. From that point on I became much more aware and conscious of what I wanted to say with my artwork and better yet, about who I was and what my existence was a culmination of. I started to ask myself – what is my relationship to nature and why such the need to comment on it? – What is my relationship to nature living in the city? –

Where do I find nature in the city? – What is the effect of nature on the city? – How does the city and how has the city affected my relationship to nature? – What is the affect of the city on Nature?

How does nature affect time (speed)? Sometimes man (the city and technology) and nature (the elements) (plant life) are in conflict. When does this occur? Sometimes the two are united and work together. When does this happen? Which relationship do I want to portray? I believe. I must simply work and the condition I’m sure will reveal itself.

\*There is a simplicity about nature. I can sit in my backyard or on my front porch in Sedalia and see and hear all of the sounds it makes and be at peace within its endless sophistication and complexity. The experience of it is so easily achieved for me – once I’m in nature I am at ease.

\*After my last trip home last week (7/15/04-7/22/04) I went rafting, camped, and sat on my porch at night. It was on my porch amongst the sound of crickets that I detected the machine and electronics and digital sound. The precision of man was in every rehearsed evocation coming from the cricket. But it is man who represents the cricket and tries harder to get it right. The cricket simply is. It is harmony without effort. It is instinct and pure. The cricket harbors no fears or hesitation. Perhaps those humans who set these complications aside are those who achieve the truth within nature. The sound from the cricket reminded me of the sound of the city. All of the mechanical and technological sounds created with city streets were compressed and sung by the cricket. As were the nuances of electronic music made by people. We unconsciously replicate the sounds of nature every day... or are we also nature? I find it hard to perceive myself as nature because I am distanced from it by my ability to reflect on it. Reflection harbors restraint and dishonesty. Nature does not have the choice of purity, it is always by default, honest. It does not question or lose itself. It does not mimic or copy others artificially as humans do.

Is Nikki S. Lee the same as the chameleon? What sets them apart? Who is copying who? Is she nature the same way the chameleon is? There are other animals who shapeshift to look like other animals and their environment as well. Was Nikki S. Lee born into her life as an identity shifter just as the chameleon is without choice. Is it instinctual on both sides... Nikki Lee's and the chameleon's?

What makes up nature? Does it encompass animal life too? Is my perception of nature, all life forms other than human? Is our memory what sets us apart from nature?

Within the language of abstraction it seems logical for me to reference Peter Halley. His work represents the example of the city revealed through abstraction. I do not share his beliefs nor do I desire a cold geometric style of abstraction. I want to subject Halley to nature. Nature is exempt from his pictures and I must expose the cell to the elements. My pictures involve the hand and a natural palette. These attributes are within me. The visibility of my hand and my use of a greyed natural palette come from and represent nature. My reference to the cell (Halley) and to geometry, represent the city. As I have lived in and experienced both nature and the city. I want to twist the cell with tornadoes, sink the cell in the ocean, subject the shell of the cell to weather and deterioration. I want to demonstrate man's perpetual building and rebuilding of the city as it deteriorates with time inside of and surrounded by nature. I have employed the reduced form of the scaffold to metaphorically convey this resilient construction of man's buildings and technology within nature.

Nature possesses the ability to slow man's perception of time as witnessed during the 2003 New York City blackout. What does civilization do when it cannot function at speeds we are accustomed to? This question interests me and scares me. Though I found peace in this blackout because of personal desire for nature, I felt as if the city maintained profound illusions during the occurrence. We partied like it was a vacation – not serious, ever. We did not question the repercussions as much as we should have. It revealed our asleep state of mind with regard to the power of nature and the fragility of technology. We felt that everything would immediately return to "normal." Back to the speed of everyday post-modern existence. This attitude is dangerous and must be awakened with awareness. This seems an impossible endeavor at times, but all the worth it.

This stance is needed. There is a sickening overabundance of digital art, computer art. (Art made by or art that looks digital.) Since I have been in New York the past 4 years I have seen too many hard-edged painters. Not to mention the crazy amount of photography and photographic painting styles. The use of mechanics in painting's process may be excessive. Saltz may have been right in his analysis he wrote in the Village Voice article banning projection and tracing. I have experienced its diminishing returns firsthand as my work used to employ photographic means of representation. I reached an end quickly with this work – it became too programmatic – diagrammatic – and premeditated. The creation of the drawings became work, all thinking happened prior each piece. I became discontent and had to seek out more intuitive ways of working and making pictures.

—Peter Halley encompasses all that I despise in art. He creates art from theory. He is someone else's ideas and Baudrillard himself denounces artists such as Halley. His art and ideas are diluted and surface. He is the product of post-modernism and of Baudrillard's writings (i.e. Simulations) that effectively say nothing. Baudrillard purposely says nothing in "Simulations." And Halley bought into it all. It is seductive I admit, but Halley was searching for an instruction manual on what to paint. It's really quite pathetic. And Halley is swallowed by the artworld, continuously promoted and praised. He is commodity. Art is commodity. But one shouldn't make art as commodity.

—So many artists I know and go to school with are hung up on irony. It all feels so dated already, the ideas don't communicate effectively. Everything is about a joke... everybody laugh... everyone gets the one liner and shares in the fun. This dangerous approach and attitude simply sits on the surface of all in life. It never, or rarely, penetrates to something deep. It doesn't reveal – it confuses, it distracts us from the truth of things. No one ever feels emotion – just artificiality. They think about feeling emotion, but never truly experience it. They are scared and desire the easy life... habitual existences.

## **On Culture**

7/25/04

\*extracted from Maintain Speed "Painting as Sociogram" by Makiko Mitake pg. 51

—"In his early essay "The Crisis in Geometry," He argues that the process of geometric abstraction is a vehicle for deciphering the social world... The development from prison to cell with conduits is marked by his shift from Foucault to Baudrillard. Whereas the prison is associated with the image of industrial society's system of product and process, the cell schematizes the networked social world dominated by consumer experience."

7/25/04

—The vehicle of geometric abstraction is unreliable in the Halley sense. How can it decipher the social world accurately when nature possesses the ability to render it useless in a single second. The 2003 blackout temporarily shut down an entire city full of men and women who believed it to be a harmless event. They celebrated in the streets like it was a vacation, under the illusion of

technological supremacy. This is something worth investigation. Nature is with us now. More than ever, it simply is not on the minds of the people. I will try to bring an awareness.

\*Halley, in his essay, 'Nature and Culture,' states – “The advent of post-industrialism has also seemed to make obsolete the very concept of nature, giving rise to a critique of the reign of nature in art.”

—Now, the absence of nature in art, over the past 25 years, must be addressed. Halley has helped to create a delusional interpretation of the world. His depictions of conduits and cells in a cold geometric style draws attention to technology and removes the fear or presence of nature. I must attack him directly, within my art.

—I don't see what Sarah Morris has to offer “Abstract” painting. She simply exists as a counterpart, lesser painter, to Peter Halley.

—Peter Halley and Sarah Morris do create quickly read paintings. I know that this is precisely one of Halley's intentions, I'm not sure about Morris. What is exciting in reading a painting that requires little or no attention. They exist like the Pop Song, a catchy little tune but has nothing more to offer you than nagging frustration and a deeper desire (longing) for content. They're easily processed and spit out. Tiny distractions void of nourishing contemplation. They don't make you really think, only about how to eliminate the distraction. This trick, I have grown extremely tired of. It has conquered painting of the last 25-30 yrs. All of Pop – until now.

—How to look at a Halley and Morris painting... Stand in the doorway of the gallery, see the paintings like a landscape for .5 seconds... Leave. This is all it takes to digest every image, no matter how many are present in the gallery. If for some reason you are caught in the “Explosion and Speed” of the paintings (likely) walk closer. There truly is nothing more to examine, but perhaps you will be fooled (extremely likely) into having a closer look. At this point you will focus on a tiny portion of an image and spontaneously you have already deciphered the whole painting, as every tiny portion to follow has already been predicted by you. Easy, anyone can do it. The luxury of not having to think will be as gratifying as and entertaining as reality TV.

\*On My Paintings\*

Should I bring an equilibrium where nature and culture exist together in the pieces? Halley's cell painted in day glow submerged beneath my painterly marks and natural palette. The tension must be conveyed throughout the battle of man vs. nature – as each struggle for room.

Now the pieces are dominated by a natural palette and handwork. Should I also appropriate Halley's colors as well as his forms to convey the relationship? A better balance. A clash of two worlds forming one. I would like to show more of a balance between Halley's (Post-Modern thought and aesthetics) and Newman or Rothko's (Modern thought and aesthetics) a balance of city and nature, urban and rural, New York City and Sedalia; both places I have lived.

## Summary

—Really, you can sum up my entire education as a struggle between Nature and Culture —

Modernism and Post-Modernism. Looking back at art, the many decades I have studied, culture is still gaining on nature, it would seem. But, my ultimate goal, is to marry the two.

Transcribed and summarized on 7/22/20.

## Plato From Symposium

Love is the child of his Father, the God Poros or Plenty, and the son of his mother, Penia or poverty. Love is the follower and attendant of Aphrodite.

(Nature)

\*Like Love's Mother – He is always poor and anything but tender and fair, as the many imagine him; and he is rough and squalid and has no shoes, nor a house to dwell in; on the bare earth exposed he lies under the open Heaven, in streets, or at the doors of houses, taking his rest; and like his mother he is always in distress.

(Culture)

\* Like his Father Too, whom he also partly resembles, he is always plotting against the fair and good; he is bold, enterprising, strong, a mighty hunter, always weaving some intrigue or other, keen in the pursuit of wisdom, fertile in resources; a philosopher at all times, terrible as an enchanter, sorcerer, sophist.

Love exists in a mean between ignorance and knowledge, between his mother and father.

Love's Father is wealthy and wise, and his mother poor and foolish. Such my dear Socrates, is the nature of the spirit of love.

(Nature and Culture)

Love is not all beautiful. For the beloved is truly beautiful, and delicate, and perfect, and blessed; but the principle of love is of another nature. Love is of the beautiful.

Love may be described as the everlasting possession of the good. And the happy are made happy by the acquisition of good things. For there is nothing which men love but the good. Love is not the love of the beautiful only but of the love of generation and of birth in beauty. To the mortal creature generation is a sort of immortality and eternity. Marvel not then at the love which all men have of their offspring; for that universal love and interest is for the sake of immortality. Think only of the ambition of men, and you will wonder at the senselessness of their ways, unless you consider how they are stirred by the love of an immortality of fame. They are ready to

run all risks greater far than they would have run for their children, and to spend money and undergo any sort of toil, and even to die for the sake of leaving behind them a name which shall be eternal.

All creation or passage of non-being into being is poetry or making, and the processes of all art are creative; and the masters of arts are all poets or makers. (They are lovers) and those drawn to love by any other path, whether the path of money-making or gymnastics or philosophy, are not called lovers. But they too, share the desire for immortality.

## MY NOTES

With painting the artist can only present or show elements next to different elements arranged within the whole. The coming together of disparate elements happens within the mind of the viewer, within perception. Perception requires the mind and the senses. First we experience materiality with our senses, then the coming together of the sensory experience within the mind. The coming together of the senses within the mind can be described by no other language than the one perceived. Perception is not the coming together of elements into understanding, but within experience. For perception cannot be precisely quantified, unlike understanding. Perhaps it could be said that understanding is false and illusionary and doesn't exist in the world, only perception. I fear making this statement for it is broad and absolute in nature and I may not possess the proper tools or non-tools of validation. But if not I, for I may be lacking, than who? Are not all men lacking in something.

Even then the description would differ and be inaccurate, therefore, perception is left to personal experience within the singular mind of the viewer. Unless alone. Less distraction when viewing equals a fuller perceptual experience, hence forth, isolated viewing is paramount! This is the nature of the secluded artist within their studios, and lives, to acquire fuller moments of perception. The accumulation of full moments of perception, undistracted viewing, leads to the development of individual sensibility. (I might add, the social is the cultural here, and the solitude is the natural here.) All artists are involved with the development and representation of their sensibility. The inventiveness of one's sensibility is determined by their awareness of self during representation. The succinction of one's external representation to the self or sensibility of the artist requires an undistracted mind within creativity. You can see now why isolation is most significant to the development and realization of the artist's invention.

Written in 2004. Edited and transcribed on this day of January 22, 2022.





Inspiration #9: Red Bird, 2022, Sand, Acrylic, and Oil on Canvas, 60 x 60 inches

## On Painting

As I look out over my paintings over the years, I see myself, ever strong and diverse. I will not lie. I have thought I've changed, but I realize I haven't. My soul is the same. Nuanced and everlasting. And the same is true of our work, which only appears to change. Our work appears to change but it doesn't. Our work of the world. From beginning to end we are the same soul.

Self changes very slowly. Only you can change yourself. And it is not by self-abasement or abandonment that it should be done. Accomplishments are what the self strives for, relishes in. It's my insight that your completion of yourself occurs slowly upon the fulfillment of your own goals and dreams. And even though I am

happy alone, it was my dream to marry (but never my goal). It is your responsibility to fulfill your own goals and dreams. Yet, this dream, ever alive in me, has remained somewhat dormant. I never made it a goal for myself, until now, for the sake of my career. Goals are nearsighted. Dreams are not. Goals and dreams are related but also quite different. Goals are more while dreams are less practically strived for. At times they are so distant they feel out of reach. They feel out of our hands because we set them to a higher standard. So, in this lifetime, for as long as I know, I will remain alone. Marriage has been relegated to a mostly unattainable dream. Being alone as an artist is my dream but I can feel it changing within me. It has been the most difficult decision of my life but, if you can call it that, and I will return to this topic later. For now, let's stay on track together. There is a surprising condition of artworks I would like to consider.

In this world you must be brave enough to contradict yourself. You must have the courage to do so! You will do it over and over and over again. Your artwork will change again and again, and each time you will think to yourself, this time I will get it right. This is the time I stay on track. But with painting it is not this way. I have thought this many times. And then the paintings change. But only the outward appearance changes, not your soul.

Barnett Newman once stated that really all one does is work on one painting their entire lifetime. And this is true. Your all-encompassing voice is yourself and soul embarking on the journey together. I remember thinking to myself several times: this series should last me for the rest of my life! I'll just change a little this way and a little that way, but maintain my overall appearance. Like Cezanne and his Mountain Peak. But in the end, it's just nonsense thinking that way, if it is not you. You must go where the inspiration takes you, where the honesty is, where the discoveries are, where the freedom is at. We begin young and naïve and think to ourselves, I want this and that and the other thing, but you must be realistic with yourselves, if you want the artwork to be free.

We are conditioned to want relationships and marry, have a home and children, but the artist's life is different than that. So, you must be honest with yourselves if you want to marry, otherwise your wife or husband and children might suffer a great deal of pain from it. It is important to remember the conditioning is not real. What is real is knowing what you need, not what you want. Better yet, what you need and want. And there is only one path to accomplish this in your artwork.

You have to do the work that makes you free. And with painting, it is a practice, devotion, and a discipline on a parallel with religious practice, so you will want to make decisions that provide you with freedom for your art-making. When painting, if you are not free, the viewer is not free. Painting is about progress and freedom above all, personally and universally. You will meet contrary viewers, ones who do not like your aesthetic. However, you must stick to the positive outcomes, and to those people and individuals who see in your work positive qualities; otherwise, you are bound to stray off course. What happens is regret from not sticking to yourself, to your

inspirations. You will encounter paintings and other people that challenge your ideas and inspirations. In your own work, follow the work and your natural impulse to be free. This part, the freedom of yourself within the world, is the guiding factor. We detect freedom. It is possible in the work and outside of the work but you must stick to what makes you feel good on the inside! This is the way of progress; it always has been and forever will be.

And for the students of art, do your best. It is necessary to have a space to work, one where you can be free from distractions. Alone. This is not as easy as it sounds. You might think, oh, once I get the space I'll be free, but it does not work that way. The mind is fickle at times. Pressures are tremendous at times. There will be times you cannot make it into your studio. But all of this is part of the process of being an artist. Some of you cannot work and some of you are not working at present. What I mean by this is a job. Some of you need a job to support yourself to offset the monetary pressures of being in your studios. So have hope!

You must purchase materials for your creativity. Some of you have support from family but some of you might not. For those of you who might not, keep it in mind the value of your work. This is of great significance. Because once you realize that your work is valued by you, you will find more confidence to do your work. So, all in all, you need a space to work in and confidence to do your work there. Think in terms of a space to sit in or stand at to do your work, as well as having a space for storage of your many artworks.

And as students of painting, you might find times hard when spinning your wheels, not knowing what to paint. Perhaps you are overthinking it and should wait. But you might be in a classroom, so paint. Paint anything. Just do. You see, that is painting at times. The just doing is true. You don't have to sit and wait for too long within the classroom. Your instructor will harp on you. So work. I urge my painting students to look at other art for inspirations. Many denied the possibilities. Look outside the doors and within the classrooms also. You will identify with something, eventually. And it is important to know that artwork is not always the illustration of a preconceived idea. You might find it beneficial to work automatically at times. See what happens.

You will paint then, and you will find your results dissatisfying, at times. Your instructors might see this and ask what is going on. Well, just paint and keep going. Keep at it! Do your thing, but be aware. Try to explain your situation and circumstance. There is not much that can truly be said if you are working all the time. There is usually an audience somewhere for what you are doing so this might mean that your studio mates are on your side watching what you are doing as well. Converse with them. Ask questions of them. But try not to force responses out of them. They might say something that hurts you, at that time. Be aware, like I said, while you are working and especially when you are not working. It was Agnes Martin who said something like this: There is the work before the work, there is the work itself, and the work you must do after the working is completed.

Life is this way... Those who care most will not disturb you as you are working. But life gets in the way sometimes, so go with it! But you know when enough is enough and mention it to them and to yourselves if you are doing something.

There are two structures within the world that we know of best, as artists! We call it harmony and disharmony. They seem separated at times, but they are similar, in some ways. Balance is our direction, the direction of successful artworks. Disharmony is illustrated at times like this—structures unstable and off kilter going in every which direction at once and it is tainted with negativity. Harmony is often illustrated as pure and free flowing and is indicative of balance and of positivity, a procession of thought is enabled by the paintings. Balance, being the marriage of the two!

A little disharmony goes a long way for most of us, so keep it to a minimum, is my recommendation. Otherwise, you may have a harder time in life, which is not always a bad thing but keep it in mind that your artwork should remain positive...

If your work should get too negative, you are bound to get lost! At which time it is best to take a backseat to everything. And should your artwork get too sweet you might think of living a little to keep awareness. Remember that old saying: The calm before the storm?

It's all about your connection with life, of life, and to life! This is what makes the expression pulsate, harmonizing your expression with LIFE! So, we try to walk the line with life and of life and to life. Not venturing too far off of the line, bumpy as it may get!

The backroads are pleasant at times, but darkness can get to you, so the thoroughfares might serve you best if needing a bit of light at times. I know it is hard with exhaustion to keep to the main highways, but, the Black Sheep, well, that's what you might be called if you stray too far from the rest of us! God knows I've been known for doing that but be good when doing so! So, that is the key to the backroads.

And you might wonder what I mean by being so good. Well, what I mean is: by staying on an even keel you might find greater successes. And I try not to moralize too frequently, but some things must be said about it... Living the moral life is living the quiet life of solitude. It's a good life. And you might be married, and you might be wanting to have children, but I recommend taking a good look at yourself as you are thinking about it. It's not something an artist should get trigger happy about.

You see?

We are sensitive people on the insides and on the outsides, so bring this to mind when thinking about it. It might be enough for you to carry on doing only your work while keeping others in mind as you are creating; this is your decision and it is an important one, so be kind to others while doing so...

While keeping in mind the balance of yourself within the world, it might not be such a bad thing, the harder road is likely the one I have decided upon for myself. I don't know, I am quite single in this world... I find it provides me with space and time enough to work as I select to!

Selection of time, friends, and the need for money are necessities when considering the artistic life. Like-minded people will serve you well! I would like to say that should you marry and have children, as an artist, life might get tumultuous at times, but it will surely be exciting for you!

But do not be careless – Above all, I recommend keeping in mind your children's concerns, as it may take a long time before you see profits from your artwork... As a younger man I was careless about this, and as you can see, I have learned a lot from it. And it remains my decision not to marry. So, consider this world, and yourself in it!

Freedom, it comes and it goes, so be well in it. Be good at it. And you will know what you want with it and need. You will find it greeting you at times.

Be aware.

Be good.

And it will remain in you forever, so long as you work at it continuously. And the muses, they will come to greet us now. Like Plato and his illustration of the cave, walled on either side and behind us, keep your mind on what's in front of you, and around you.

Even though he meant it negatively I would like to evoke the positivity of light entering the front of the cave, and I would like to note that you will only move forward in your lives. Even upsets are a moving forward. We all learn the hard-way at times. The freshest air just outside your studio entrance will be enough to breathe with the contentment of looking out and around you, and the sunlight will warm you, then. And the walls within your mind will fall.

And the moon in the silent nighttime will be enough to cool you. You will see as the nocturnal animal does into the nighttime with vision. (But we must care for this state of being.) We must, or it will be our time before we are ready. Progress is redeeming and you will make great paintings. For there to be change, it must come from the heart, and all you must do is be yourselves!



Obstacle and Void: Orange and Blue, 2019, Acrylic on Wooden Panel, 57 5/8 x 17 5/8 inches

### **On Sculptures**

Rodin has touch, Giacometti... has touch! Cy Twombly – touch. And Arny Nadler has touch in their sculptures. This, my friends is the key to it! Without touch you lose feelings, and without feelings emotions. So, when I think of an object consumed by touches of the hand, I get emotional with it! I belong to it, to the higher order from above! It cannot be all concept all of the time! It wears you out. So to make an object with feeling is to add touch to it. I love these things, writing about them, so others can make up their own minds! And so I can reach a certain resolution, within my own.

## **On Sexuality**

In writing a book that contains so much ambiguity in terms of art and in life, one should not forget to address sexuality when considering the context of art and life. Yes, I am heterosexual, but, it contains a poem that suggests otherwise, it broadens the context of the book. One must remember in life and in art that convolution is necessary, at times. One needs to be accepting of others.

And even though I feel that there is much to do about sexuality in these times I still feel as though it is important in art and in life to address what and who you are as a person. Personally, I was on the fast track in this way when I was young, but I understand that others are having trouble with their sexuality in this world. And to be accepting of others, and of my sexuality as it stands with the others, I let the poem also stand.

## **On Skill in the Arts**

The question should not be, “Who was the most skilled artist of their times?” Or, of any times, but one of, “Does the piece of artwork skillfully render the message clearly?” It shouldn’t be about a flourishing of skill so much as it should be about sufficiency of technique, that is, “Does the artwork I am looking at have what it takes to communicate effectively and sufficiently, on some levels of feeling, and thinking?”

Because, as we know of there are the rudimentary forms present in this world as we know it, and the lavishly produced at this time. It is a matter of tone to me.

## **On Teaching**

The problem with students today is that they do not listen. Some do and some do not. Many do not. You must want it. In order to gain the offerings of the person speaking to you, the teacher, you must be open and willing to listen. And, what it is you have in your mind, get it out, but be understanding of your instructors. It is you whom will suffer. It is you whom will not be willing to do your best if you do not listen to them. Teaching, I was great at it. I loved it very much, but I am done with it for now. I cannot and will not listen to another disagreement about this thing or that thing within the classroom. And disagreements arise because of students whom aren’t listening. I have tried and I have succeeded. My parting words are this. Listen to me. Or, you are the one who will suffer from it. Thank you.



## **On the Discourse and Work of Montgomery**

When will they understand, the work is the work and the talk is second. You must make the honest work. In listening to a video on an artist's talk the other day, what was said more or less was that he, the artist speaking, was too scared to make what he wanted. So now, he's caught up in espousing more or less, that the abstract expressionists were too honest. Yet, that is how he starts a "painting." The artist I am taking to task is, Joseph Montgomery. For his sincere words, against painting. His sincerity that is lacking honesty. Still caught up in his graduate studies I'm assuming, because what he is saying, reporting on, actualizing by way of his work, unfortunately is that it is good, to lie.

Not good. Not by any means. But he's an all-star artist, right? I mean, that's how he got there, right? Through lying.

For what, for money? What an idiot! And the rest, can go fuck themselves.

## **On the Ridiculousness of Ayn Rand's, "The Cult of Moral Grayness"**

To further your understanding of Ayn Rand's idiocy, I would like to share with you my conclusions to her essay, "On the Cult of Moral Grayness." I have always had issue with her philosophy, from the start. It has not been clearer until now. She begins the essay with a synopsis of Grey, essentially. She claims, without black and white, there would be no Grey, as it was. Well, she was wrong. And this goes to prove that when being philosophical, one, at best, should remain within their own forte when speaking in terms they understand.

Well, there are, at least, two ways to create grey, that I know of, and I speak as a painter in this regard, firstly. Grey can be made achromatically and chromatically. In its simplest form, it is the combination of white and black in equal parts to create a neutral grey, a true grey so to speak, that does not lean toward black or toward white. An achromatic neutral!

Now, the other way to make grey is much more sophisticated! In my world, it is the combination of 25 colors, excluding the use of black, to this point. Who knows, to be fair, I might just add a little black, in the future, I am realizing now, to be fair temperature wise. Nevertheless, with 25 colors and less, one can exhibit greys. And most interestingly, without the use of black, or white. The simplest means I have found chromatically, meaning, by using colors such as red, yellow, and blue in various increments, one can achieve a balanced, grey outcome. A chromatic neutral. Which by the way creates a richer, deeper, more complex grey!

So, what I am saying, is this: her example yields an achromatic grey. Neutral in coloration, nearly. But even this is a stretch, since, temperature wise it is nearly implausible to achieve a perfectly neutral temperature from a black and a white. Carbon Black goes blueish, cooler on the scale, others go warmer on the scale, shifting your grey to one side or the other. So perhaps she should have thought of that! Warm vs. cool, instead of grey vs. black and white. Or perhaps, she

should not have thought of versus of any kind? Instead opting for a more inclusive order of things.

Anyhow, my point I am trying to make is this. The more inclusive way to create it, grey, is to use colors. It creates a, as I stated above, more complex grey that in actuality, can be balanced. And more easily balanced, in my opinion!

So when speaking about morals, as a painter, a humble philosopher, and a poet, I must say, I prefer the later way of mixing colors together to create a grey! Remember people, life is so complicated. We try to make it, simple.

Furthermore, it is worth it to say, an artist by the name of Hilma af Klint stated through her work in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, that, it is possible that grey existed long before its division into black and white, a remedial, according to her, understanding, of life that occurred long after the “grey,” or more, “universal” occurrence took place. Black and white being symbolic of grey’s division into diametrically opposed thinking, or, between men and women, in her case. Which is also sounding somewhat absurd to me now, but I’ll leave that to another time!

## **Order of Perception II**

The first state of perception is sensory, pure feeling! The second state of perception is an emotional response to the sensory, did it *feel* good to us? The third state is the intellectual, wherein we weigh the original positive, indifferent, or negative directive when highly aware!

#1 Feeling – #2 The Beautiful – #3 Intellectual Response (The instincts trigger an emotional reaction of reason.)

## **Origins – circa 2011**

The origin of the world is undefined; therefore, I live my life in this way – always changing and staying the same. Even death is transformative; I know of nothing in life that is finite, that does not take on multiple forms, this is to say, that is not susceptible to change. Reality is in flux.

## **Painting**

Empathy plays a large role in painting. One must suffer to do their work. I’m not saying go seek it out, but it’s necessary as is joy, it happens. The work stems from the artist’s ability to empathize with others. Life is painful, and yes, it is called painting, but that doesn’t mean that we as artists suffer more than others or that we experience anymore elation than others. It just means we are able to empathize, as we do so frequently while working. The most important decisions

count for something when creating and those decisions, be them personal, or otherwise, are very meaningful to others.

## **Painting Post Photography**

As Jack Whitten said before he died, photography has been the single most influential medium on painting since its development. Once I was hired at the University of Central Missouri it occurred to me their more traditional advocacy of drawing from observation. What I took from this experience was less dependency on the photograph as a means to get the image I was after. Now I paint without it both nonobjectively from my imagination and representationally from direct observation of nature. What occurs to myself at the moment, is the utter relevance of my abstractions, my work I refer to as “Inspirations.” The paintings do not rely on photography or any post photographic technological advancement outside of the painting to be a painting. This may be their most significant relationship to our world. Their content is manifested from within. And their look likewise is abstracted. They are not flattened by the computer generated or photographic image, or by myself, due to the images being conveyed or constructed. They are, in most cases, imageless. Their autonomy is progressive if we consider painting post developments in technology. They are a return to the self. And their relationship is to the world a warm one; direct and poignant in their meaning. And their meaning as such is connected to their hand-made quality of being, their essence from within, and their feeling of freedom from within in this world.

## **Paintings**

I look back over my life of experiencing things, art, mostly. And, I must say I have been the most moved by people, of course, but within the realm of art, by objects! They are physical, of this realm, tangible, and contain the spirit within multitudes! Beauty, the intellect, soft and hard. Amazed I am by them! Paintings are the best. Writing is good, but it takes thought in a hard way! Unlike the way paintings flow. And it exists as words on the page only. Music also, but you know, I’ve never wanted to see shows in my lifetime except when I was in New York! They were expensive to see, but I liked them. The audiences would be ecstatic at times! But even still, there was always a deeper experience to artwork. Alone, one reaches that place, you know the place I’m talking about. A sort of respite from the world, alone. A contemplative sojourn into yourselves. Breathtaking beauty! Heavenly experiences gained from the paintings. And I just don’t know if one can reach this level of experience in another way! I don’t think so!

## **Paintings and Memories**

Of the most memorable paintings I can recall, is abstraction, in general – the feeling, the sensations created by them, the emotions experienced in front of them, the enormity of feeling on

a grand scale when viewing the enormity of size of the paintings, and perhaps most of all the memories of visceral connections to the works is telling of which artist was the author of each painting I viewed and when. But, it would be very difficult to describe to you what the paintings looked like, exactly.

On the other hand, when remembering my favorite realistic interpretations of life in paintings, I can recall more details. The narrative, what kind of painting it was, the colors, the size, it's all there describing an event within each painting, but I could not tell you where I was, who the painting was by, or the facts of it's historical meaning... only what it meant to me at the time. If it was biblical, historical, a battle scene, a portrait, a landscape or more.

So, I find this very fascinating when considering paintings, and when considering the seeming division between total abstraction and realistic paintings. All in all, the abstract seems to be about a more metaphysical response, but also about the artist's temperament in a general manner of speaking, as well as being about their personality. Whereas, images of real life depicted in paintings seem to tell a story and by doing so keep us interested, over time, in the facts of depiction – the way the mannerist expression of people was conveyed, the look of their faces, the colors of their flesh, the sky, the landscape.

So, each have their advantages on the psyche. One, the more abstract the paintings are, the more impressionable the ethereal message, and two, the more realistic the more detailed the look within our memory.

So, it is a decision, really! What is it you want to depict for yourself, the graspable divine, or, the delicate reality? I paint each, and at times both are harnessed if I'm lucky. Such are the ways of painting.



Alignment, for Uncle Hal Daum, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

### **Passion, Motivation, and Inspiration**

Passion, you know, it's a fickle thing at times. You see it, on all the smiles. In the classroom. When my heart is beating at its heaviest! Then, you will notice, if you look, others shutting down. That's when you know! It's not their passion!

Motivation seems to require a goal, at least a vague semblance of a goal is in mind when one motivates themselves, thus one motivates toward that end. Inspiration is entirely different. Inspiration has to do with creativity at its essence, to me. Who's to say where it comes from, where its source lies, but I'm trying to find it. For now, I'm satisfied with the notion of the subconscious mind, I pull from there. It seems to me that an inspiration is manifested from wisdom, an abundance of shared wisdom connected to others through and within the subconscious mind, I believe, the human collective. Or, it may be from within entirely, from within the self, inside the individual. Divination is also a thought that others have deemed the origin of inspiration. And yes, I believe and agree with others that happiness can be shared, thus, it inspires others to motivate toward a self-oriented goal, divine or not divine.

But, it is worth it to recall, one must have an inspiration prior to motivation in my book. The inspiration comes first. Otherwise the motivation is without aim. Otherwise it is an idea. Ideas, I don't feel, originate from the same place as inspiration does. Ideas float around on the surface of the conscious collective and are a dime a dozen, as they say. They are inspirations that have gone through alterations and are less original and more available to a wider populace. But, back to passion! Passion is this: How much does it matter to you – the inspiration, the idea, the motivation, the whole enchilada? What is your purpose? What is your passion? Painting is mine.

## **Positivity I**

There are times I am frustrated with life and I lash out against my folks. But I'm here to tell you that is not the way to go. You see, you get confused about the bustle of life and its influence upon us. And, it's not their fault, or others'. Life is just life, so keep a positive mindset. Yes, you better not be hateful if you want to move forward in this life. You have to stay on top of yourself, of your mind. It will get the best of you if you let it. Therefore, smile and be happy with yourself and others. It's a positive mindset that contributes to society. And, I'll tell you, it's difficult. You ought to be thankful for what you have, it is a gift, life is. So treat it as though you want it. And then, you will receive what you want from it. Life is good. We do receive happiness most of the time if we listen. We listen, and we receive positivity by listening. I know you will have a lot that you want to say but hold your tongues. Just do. And do silently. It is hard to do you will see. But this is the path of clarity. When asked to speak up, then do so. But, also, patience is key. So speak up about it. Let others know when you will respond if troubled in the moment, otherwise, like I have experienced, the silence of yourself scares them off. And you will surely encounter difficulty, then. So, even though I have known for a very long time who I am and what I want from the world, it's not easy to receive it. Because much gets lost in communicating. Much subtlety gets lost, and divisiveness is seen instead if your subtle nature is not well received, or even received at all.

## Positivity II

I am confounded by the political. I don't know what to do with it, or even why to approach it. Negativity is what it brings to mind, nearly always. Battles, rebellion. It is not an inspiring way to live. I once was a political kid. I ran for Class Vice President, it was a popularity contest, at best. It was corrupt, even then. The system was flawed. And that word, "system," and its meaning is likely why. There is no "system" that will ever bring peace in this world. A system is perfect in the mind, strives to be perfect in reality. Now, much can be done this way. Much accomplished. But, no "system" of thought will ever accomplish reality. Another word that comes to mind is "programs." You know, political programs. Ideas put in place to run our country. Programming is problematic as well, same idea. A program is a system in place of reality. Reality is ever developing... some say evolving. I say, progressing because I am an optimistic person. But like Leonard Cohen said, reality moves in every direction, slipping and sliding, winding and bellowing, boiling and cooling. Etc. It cannot be "controlled." Not by our mind(s), and not by (us). Therefore, I say, give it up, this intellectual rant. This bellowing of negativity. This absence of real thought. Slowly, make differences. Be inspired. Allow positivity in. Let it surround you. And then, then, make something new. Make something of, worth!

It's so hard to see the light. But you must if you are going to make a difference in this world. As the light shines down from the sun this morning in my studio, I must make change. That's what I say to myself now. Or, else.





Atlas, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 60 x 60 inches

## Posterity

*“Arising in some such way, this instinct drives the genius to carry his work to completion, without thinking of reward or applause or sympathy; to leave all care for his own personal welfare; to make his life one of industrious solitude, and to strain his faculties to the utmost. He thus comes to think more about posterity than about contemporaries; because, while the latter can only lead him astray, posterity forms the majority of the species, and time will gradually*

*bring the discerning few who can appreciate him. Meanwhile it is with him as with the artist described by Goethe; he has no princely patron to prize his talents, no friend to rejoice with him:*

*Ein Fürst der die Talente schätzt,  
Ein Freund, der sich mit mir ergötzt,  
Die haben leider mir gefehlt.*

*His work is, as it were, a sacred object and the true fruit of his life, and his aim in storing it away for a more discerning posterity will be to make it the property of mankind. An aim like this far surpasses all others, and for it he wears the crown of thorns which is one day to bloom into a wreath of laurel. All his powers are concentrated in the effort to complete and secure his work; just as the insect, in the last stage of its development, uses its whole strength on behalf of a brood it will never live to see; it puts its eggs in some place of safety, where, as it well knows, the young will one day find life and nourishment, and then dies in confidence."*

—Arthur Schopenhauer, from *On Genius*, translated by T. Bailey Saunders

Less Schopenhauer mention demons, for they are indeed fierce when not working. One gets to thinking and dreaming about this or that vain tendency. But, the artist mustn't worry of posterity nor contemporaries while working. This may be truer dare I say. Pervasive are the ways of the world, the wants and desires of the common individual. But, one, while working, brushes wants from the table, and is fed, and fed well by need.

Still finding it difficult to sell, I am reminded of my friend who says that I have a 'warehouse' full of paintings. Always trying to get me to promote myself in more and different ways, he cannot understand why I resist. And in this, Schopenhauer was correct to quote Goethe when speaking about the artist. We have no 'princely patron' and nor, for our sake, should we acquire one. After all, the artist's suffering is not in vain. This is not to say that we seek it out, suffering, it's to say that at times, the suffering is worsened by the striving, by the reaching out and being denied access to money, to profits. Not to mention the time it takes to be a robust individual on this Earth, which in any weighing of the mind and heart devalues our need of surface contemplations and meaningless friendships without those who might hold money the highest on the shelf. For, our concentrations need time and time spent well adjusting our deepened gaze to that of future generations, for the future is who needs us most.

## **Preparatory Notes for an Interview**

The more analytical you become about your work the better it will become.

And I believe it's true.

I mean, if you want your work to last beyond your lifetime and into the future it's true. If you look at the greatest artists it's true. I mean look at Picasso or Van Gogh, these guys were devoted

to their art. They would say things and write things about their work that let the viewer in about their worldview. I mean, there are some artists whom don't get so deep with it, their work, and that's not enough. It's not enough. They may be discussed and praised for the here and now, but what then? Life goes on, you know. Whether we do or not it moves forward. I want to as well, even if it's just the work to represent me, I want people to know who I was. That I cared.

## **Properties**

Paintings are these things. **Still.** They do not move. **Silent.** They do not make a sound.

**Reflective.** The paint reflects the light! **Flat.** An undisturbed and uniform surface, at most times, reflects harmonious natural light into our eyes.

So, I will make still, silent, and reflective forays of my liking! Pure colors meeting atmospheric effects in an array of spectral colors. Dark, medium, and light without collage elements to interfere with the overall appearance of light. Meaning no chaotic interference of elements in which the light is not uniform in design. Soft. Using just the weave and palette knives! Flat.

Bas relief reaches outward three dimensionally verging on sculptural elements in the paintings. I do not need this. Sand though, may or may not be permitted and uniformly.

## **Process Versus Technique**

Perhaps I should learn to not say process in place of technique; the artist's process doesn't change that much, yet, at times, his technique does. Process, in my mind, refers to life's process within the individual. He is himself, the artist. Yet, outward appearances can be deceptive seemingly. If the artist does grow at all, sometimes it takes a change in technique for his growth to occur!

## **Pushing Forward, Taking Risks, & Living**

If there is something I know about painting it is this. You have to push on. You must stay ahead of yourself, but with yourself when and while you paint. You cannot get bogged down in the old work, the new work guides us.

Resting on your laurels is a bad idea, always. Resting on anything, the new is where it is. You must be direct in your choices with painting, or it falls to pieces, the painting. One thing, one entity enduring itself for all time is not our job to consider. We change, it changes, the paintings do. The way it's been done for a long while. You see, it's not about us, it's about them. About

keeping the thing moving. Learning is key. With change comes learning. With learning comes opportunities. It's unavoidable but taking risks are avoidable but not if you are living. With living one takes risks.

Take a risk and live, or, fail to and die. You see.



Studio Shot (Just got the three larger paintings back from Todd Kreisel's space.)

### **Pushing It – August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020**

It's been too long. My purest decisions come from the shape-based work. Black, white, and grey on canvas! Easy cheesy. Working my way. Into oblivion. Having a ball. Serious works.

Shape meeting composition. First choice, what size to make it. Second choice, how to make it? Third choice, what color. Fourth choice, where to sign it. On the back or on the fronts! On the fronts.

Take the image back from the minimalists. Announce pressures. Resume paintings that announce the self! Regain ground. Fighting for leverage. Allow emotions into it!

Color, maybe. But only after having worked for a long time without. Implied color! Something to think about!

The bird. The Blackbird as an image to be dealt, with. In my own way. The essence is not about representing it plainly, but discreetly! Terrifically, in yellow in my head. Without, yellow.

Working the way, I was meant to do. Taking back the years they took from me. New York worried. I didn't. They took it from, me. I will take it, back. They will give me a show, somewhere. Someday.

I have mastered color beyond others I know of, for now. Once, an instructor, Tim Rollins said to me something about just working in black the rest of my, life! Well, he helped! But, the time has come that I must wipe the slate clean. To fight for space on this Earth. He warned, me. Said it would be difficult in his own words. It helped to find room for myself, allowed me his way of thinking. Or rather, about space. Space to find. Space to do. Even still, who was he to say how it should, be. Yet, a part of me agrees. Color for life. Simpler. Easier. Plain.

Black, white, and grey is difficult to work with. Others say stupid things about it.

Sophisticated, it is! Takes imagination to work that way. Variations on a theme is the way to go. Infinite possibilities that way. Switch up the shapes. Switch up the colors. Change the seriousness. Curves versus straight shapes! Machined. Mechanical. Straight. Suggestions in space! Softer. I must remember the inner. The insides are expansive. Brushed on and hand painted to express beauty! Very soft!

\*If you go without in your work for long enough, you learn what's most important to you. Also, if you keep working long enough you learn what's most important, to you. It's more like the second way. But, what I mean is, I've worked in different styles. So, when one wanes, you see its necessity.

Necessity

As a painter there is only one question from which all questions come, "What is painting to me"? Only after intense observation of the paintings themselves do I find the answer, and not even then do I fully understand even the meaning.

I don't paint *about* anything and ideas worry me. I try not to concern myself with themes about painting. No longer do I consider the illusionistic representation, illustration or metaphorical reflection of external conditions; at least, no more than the metaphorical is pervasive to my mind during making and viewing. This is a matter of my most direct self-confrontation and intent, not

avoidance, denial or escape from the obligations of the world. Declaratively, I want the paintings to exist as a stage void of acting and free from hiding for all viewers to project their own true feeling and perception of self.

My perfection and happiness only exists in my mind, not in the world, so I move inward to find it and feel it in all of its elusiveness but cannot represent it. I am closest to it when I paint, so I continue, attempting to prevent unnecessary distractions that may come between my physical and mental bond with time. Unfulfilled and restless at mind I move deeper into self-awareness, into freedom. To me, art and painting have always approximated more or less the same thing: all artists have perfected, abstract and representational.

I hope for significance in my painting.

Between painting and belief, I find no gap.

Compassion for people and all things seen and unseen may be the most important human quality. It is the commitment to one's own ideal shared indirectly without need for action. I would like for the paintings to express my deepest compassion.

Every piece is an inconclusive result to my experience of living and painting, one not separate from the other.

The work is born out of being and exists how it exists, without me. For the paintings to propose something and to tell nothing, not even with a whisper, is my most sincere hope.

Shape, shape is important to me. It is always changing but the form stays the same. The shape and composition happens at the same time, nothing is planned and the shapes are not placed.

A specific abstract feeling comes over me mentally and physically. Within calmness the feeling is clear and I understand what to paint. Rarely do I see the image before I start. I only know the first point of the first side of the first shape. From that point I make the painting without thinking, responding only to how it is I feel and to what I see before me. If my thoughts drift to metaphor or onto intellectual tangents, more often than not, the feeling is blocked and the painting ends in a series of faults.

Color, as well as all things seen and unseen, touched and untouched, heard and unheard, smelled and not smelled can be expressed with black, white and grey.

The drawings and paintings inspire each other without instructing, diagramming or planning. They sometimes appear similar, but are never preliminary.

## **Quarantined**

In the beginning of pandemic, I was alone. I quarantined like everybody did, yet there was hope! My friends and I set up live quarantined phone calls with video feeds. Google group chats! But I was alone! So I drank often times when with them. To get through the pain we felt. It was relieving to know. And the gods were kind to us.

And I never stopped working, as a matter of fact, I went back to the basics of form, meaning, and touch. The works were simple, I emphasize were at this time. They wanted to be like the cavemen paintings of past ages! Blacks, white, greys, browns! The first I titled, Blackbird, after Malevich. It simply reminded me of the appearance of a blackbird! And now it is ruined.

Because I let it dissipate in here! I let my mind get the best of me one night! Yet, I wonder really if it is ruined?

It's black with colorful mark making now!

## **Reflection, Contemplation, Meditation**

The other day on Sirius radio I heard the evening host interview a musician, Father John Misty. "As a person who's had the opportunity for reflection...", she said to him – referring to the artist's free time as if he had an abundance of it. It made me doubt for a moment, as if to feel bad knowing I have also had this "luxury." But she was wrong. Contemplation and reflection are not luxuries, they are necessities. Certainly for myself. And if one takes the time to reflect then clarity is yours to have and to hold. It was almost as if she was excusing him for taking the time to think, like he was guilty of a bad deed or something. A deed that one only practices if given the time. No, you make the time for reflection, contemplation, and meditation, or for whatever it is that you need to do. You make the time for relaxation, it is no luxury, it is free and necessary. You can't tell me you don't have the time. That is bullshit. If a hermit in the mountains of China who lives alone in isolation, is entirely self-serving, modest, lives on the land, on the crops he or she produces alone in isolation, can find the time to meditate – do not tell me you don't have the time. It is absolute nonsense thinking that way.

## **Religions of Today**

Top three Eastern religions of today: Hinduism, Taoism (feminine), Buddhism (masculine)

Top two Western religions of today: Christianity (feminine), Catholicism (masculine)

The two most influential to Western thought today: Christianity (feminine) and Taoism (feminine)



## **Religious Experience and Understanding**

I believe somewhat as was stated in a Time Life video documentary from the 70's about the main religions in China (Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism) and in Taiwan more specifically, that good and evil, if one may call it that, that each exists in positive balance with one another, in succinct balance, but at times good and evil are imbalanced as understood and described by a Chinese Fulbright scholar in the video. This is my foremost tenant in my first book of Twonism, from my third section titled, "Religious Experience and Understanding."

I simply did not know that this thread of thought existed until recently. The Yin and Yang meaning is likeminded to mine also, as I understand it to mean the belief that duality, or opposites are nonexistent, that everything is connected. Yet, in the mind, I do believe opposites occur within surface thinking, and are used to demonstrate effective categorical thought on various subjects. Even still, beneath it all, opposites are an illusion at best.

## **Remain Open**

To remain open to inspiration is at the center of my work. To remain open. To others, to changing, to being yourself. This is what my work is about. In teaching the arts in schools, one should expose students to useful ideas, to contemporary thought. Therefore, let them try out other ways of working. A multiplicity of techniques is what it's about, form. The visual arts are built on this. Show them books if unable to get to the galleries or museums. Show them other ways of working aside from their own humble ideas. Humility is extremely important if one is to make it as an artist in today's world, but also confidence of style, of technique, of individuality too. To be an individual, work through the past, but also, through the ideas of other's whom inform society, currently. We are a project, the visual arts is, it is a project, together. To visualize this, it is very difficult, but I assure you it is correct. To visualize what cannot be seen in today's world is your ability and your calling, my calling. Therefore, as an artist and instructor I go on working this way – to educate young folks about the ways it is done. And it is up to them to do it in their way. To use their voices, and voice. I cannot tell anybody how to do it, I only watch them do it as they do it. But, I lead. I am out in front on the fore of thought. And occasionally behind them pushing on them. Allowing for it to be done.

When I was a younger gentleman, I was shown a way. I have followed through with it in my way, therefore, do it your way when your time comes to do. And you will be on your path at that time. In a direction that is all your own. In a direction of which others will follow. So, be good at it. And the others will have you. The others will.

## **Removing the Hand is a Bad Idea**

I'm all about images, but when it comes down to it, it's about the hand, the touch, the mark making. And that can be subtle, or it can be overt. When the hand is removed from painting, or

simply from art at large, it feels detached, and is detached from the body. Therefore, the work becomes either too formal or about something else. Not my kind of work, I suppose. I like the presence of handmade gestures in painting and other kinds of artworks. The handmade seems to evoke a more authentic emotional response. Purely conceptual art lacks the hand, and therefore can't participate in reality the same way. It functions merely cognitively, albeit, aesthetically. So, in this way real artists are fighting against a sort of inhumanity. Real artists truly function this way, by the gesture, no matter how vain it may sound. And in this sense, they do the heaviest work of humankind.

## **Rest**

Clear the underbrush, the clouds from before your eyes. Don't be satisfied with sitting and waiting to be fulfilled. Don't rush around, but also don't wait forever on an inspiration. You must work. The work, at times, clears the underbrush for yourselves. It can be grueling getting to work at times, particularly when there is some disturbance around distracting you from your work. Address this distraction by avoiding it for the time being until it has past. Resolution comes in times of independence from it, from the distraction. You see, some would have it differently, they push through distraction until weary and tired and sleepless. But I assure you this is not the way to go. Within turmoil retire from turmoil. Too much is too much at times. You cannot push your way through some things, you will make mistakes in time doing as much. A residual attitude of rest is best. I say let it come to you in time. Work when you can, but not when too tired. For, the day will end, and you will rest to live another day. And the next day should be quieter, full of joy even. So, do your best with the pain of it all. It is hard knowing when to follow through with inspiration, but it will come in time.



Rainbow, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches

### **Rumination About Fighting**

As I write, reclining on my couch from the safety of this room, I ponder the notion of what it is to be a soldier. I suppose the only way to be one is to fight, or at least be trained in fighting. Then what am I? I have been in fights but I have not served our country to fight. A pest, that is what I was when I fought those fights and I no longer fight, so what am I now? It is not my job to fight. No longer is it my function if ever it was? Then who am I? Why do we fight? I understand that we are engaged in battle, our country, but why? Must we fight to live regardless of the inherent contradiction? I don't know, but what I will say is that I am much happier without fighting. I will

not pretend to enjoy it anymore. I was a prideful young man and I am not justified for having been so because I was not smart enough.



Inspiration #17, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 30 x 30 inches

## Selling

I have had more exhibitions than it's worth counting. Each and every one thinking, wow, what a nice exhibition! And my life depends upon them. But more so, on my studio pursuit. And to them, the people, I have this to say! Keep your money-grubbing fame and blame no one. For, the love is in the work and if you can't see that then take them to the shop and sell them for me. I just keep going.

## September 6, 2016 – The Meaning of Life to Me

On this evening, I learned the meaning of life to me. That essentially, we have two choices. For years, I was baffled by the cryptic words of Agnes Martin when she said, "It doesn't matter where I work, New York, New Mexico, anyplace, it's all the same. The environment doesn't have any impact on my work, because I don't paint nature, or this life, I mean, on earth. (laughs)" And it's in that infectious, loving giggle of Martin's that should have given me the clue, but her words, ever so elusive, remained out of touch to me for years.

How I believe it to be now, is that there are those who believe in painting what they see in the world around us and those who are inspired to do otherwise, to paint what cannot be seen; call it the truth, or the metaphysical, or the divine, even. You see, if you believe, there is always that other thing out there, that part of life that is larger than thou, that part that humbles us into knowing that we, if we allow it to be so, are channels by which, to Agnes Martin, love speaks to us. And she believed that if one listens quietly, we will be inspired to do as much. To quote her once more, "In the beginning there was only love. It filled the world. Love filled the world. It's pressing in on us, like air. That's my religion. Pretty short, isn't it? It suits me, I made it up myself." And for others, there is God, that supreme loving being. And for others even still, there is nothing, but us, ourselves. We are our own gods so to speak. And for me, there is everlasting equality, or love, or God, as I like to call it, but, there is no hierarchy, no shame, no high man in a temple or woman for this matter, just universal love, and equality for all. And yes, that is what I paint about, too.

We love the world and it loves us. The representational work is fun, I like it. But there is another kind of work that I would like to tell you about. The abstract. When I paint representationally I have fun, it's more or less easy to do. I like it, but the abstract is difficult. As artists, we know this to be true. We go inward. We paint the love for the world. We paint our love for our world. You see, one must do their best in this world and my best is this. I go inward and all that I ever loved goes with me and out again in an abstracted form. A quiet form. Sometimes a loud form. A mutual form of love for all of the world, the endeavor. Life. The endeavor.

And awareness is important, all the time, awareness is in us. It is available. We have it. But, our eyes can't see it. Well then, you say, if you can't see it then what is it? It is us. We are the awareness in the world. We are the best of us. We see it, we hear it, we listen, we look, we feel, we respond, we touch, we taste, we smell – we perceive and we respond. So, with this I say, be aware. Listen. You will find what you are looking for if you just open your eyes all of the time. As artists, we understand this to be true. Beauty is all around us. It comes from within, too. To see it clearly, you must be aware.





Inspiration #18: Love, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 30 x 30 inches

## Shape and Resolve

For fourteen years I've nuanced my work for myself and others, and the others have nuanced with me. I won't deny the support I've had. In doing as much, my no-nonsense approach to my paintings is what it's about now. Direct simplicity of gesture, motion, activity. The paintings are signed on the fronts. For years, with the Minimalistic approach, artists resisted this. They resisted personal emotion and I've felt its weight and shame within my approach for years. Well, self-abandonment is not my thing any longer if ever it truly was. Not when it comes to survival, and

not during these times. And certainly not with a madman in office. When I began signing my paintings' fronts, it felt like taboo. No longer. The artist must first and foremost represent himself in doing such. Survival is key to these works. A blunt emotion, a visceral form, meeting a direct response from the viewer. A take it or leave it attitude to artmaking is best. Then, you stand for something, for yourself! Not for an idea, not for something external, but for the internal and eternal self, the ideal in the mind, and it is manifested from within. What comes out of you then? Well, the work. My work. My job is not to control the viewer but to express myself and I am choosing to do it with primitive means, yet with vigor, and virtuosity, and as the cave painters would paint on walls abstractly leaving their marks, as the primordial scream might echo of survival. Over and over, in different tones, pushing it this way, pushing it that way, looking, and seeing. Finding.

### **Signing the Painting**

I sign my paintings with my initials, DF, in the lower right-hand corner of my paintings. In the lower right hand-corner, most of the time; depending on its interference with the image. In the case that it would interfere I choose the left-hand corner. This has the effect of orientating the piece to my desire. It is not my desire to confuse the viewer. I have found that without my signature; my initials, the painting is left to be what it is. By this I mean, sometimes viewers have a desire to orientate the painting to their liking. With nonrepresentational painting this is important because it is not always the desire of the viewer to know how the painting should be hung. But, I trust my intuition that my orientation is to the best of my knowledge.





Inspiration #19: A Tougher Love, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 30 x 30 inches

### **Silence** – March 20, 2018

In 1952, John Cage composed 4' 33". A short piece where he walked onto the stage, sat at the grand piano, and played nothing for four minutes and thirty-three seconds. What he realized in performing such a piece was that to him, silence was nonexistent. There were sounds coming from the audience all the while... coughing, sniffing, etc.

What I would like to say is that some personal version of silence is of utmost necessity to the artist. For him to focus, to perform, to gather his thoughts into one unified harmonious whole way of feeling. In order that he may whisper into the air the finer notes of freedom. Of freedom lost, of freedom gained, of freedom. And should he scream it by elevating a note or two or three,

let it be heard. But by no means does this mean one must follow him down the path of the artist for such a duration. The wonderful thing, the beautiful thing about paintings, is that they are silent. No such vocalizations exist with a painting. No such voices. I imagine him to have been influenced by the way of things at the time. It must have been tumultuous. And I, with silence on my side, am there. The heater groans, the radio is turned off, the birds, oh the pleasant birds chirping outside are pretty, but they are distant from myself, the cars pass on the streets one by one and I hear it all go by.

## **Sincerity**

What would seem like irony exists only in exhaustive states of revelation. Once enlightenment occurs in this way, laughter arises next. A serious unaltered tone of humility.

## **Sold Out**

We live in some fucked times. No one has the time, or the attention spans to watch anything of worth. They don't give it the attention needed, and are unwilling to sacrifice a stable mindset to do so. I just finished watching "Persona" by Ingmar Bergman last night. Only one and a half hours long and I guarantee about one of my friends is willing to do the same, to watch it, or movies like it. Maybe two.

I'm not asking for a culture of fuck ups, or for a communion of minds here. What I'm asking for is for those individuals who are scared to buck up. To experience life and death for this matter. The moral dilemma. Wrap your head around that for a few minutes is all I'm asking. And so many are unwilling, but why?

Are their lives so much more filled with life and death than mine? Do they not need to confront the possibilities of morality on a day to day bases like I do? I really doubt it. I really, really fucking doubt it. Sold out. Every damn one of them. Sold out!

Get tickets to the show people.

## **Something to Believe In**

Art is something like this. An artist makes something that we each connect with, then, we believe in that thing he made. He believes in himself and therefore we believe also. Likewise, the support, if you're lucky, is twofold. He takes a leap forward with each painting he does and this leap is decided upon first by himself and then by his viewers. She either accepts the piece of love or not. The artist is by no means responsible for the opinions of others. Only he is responsible for those whose opinions matter to him. But, I must say one more thing about this. Completion of a

painting is decided upon by the artist himself. If the painting is acceptable to his mind, the painting is completed. If not, he is unsatisfied.

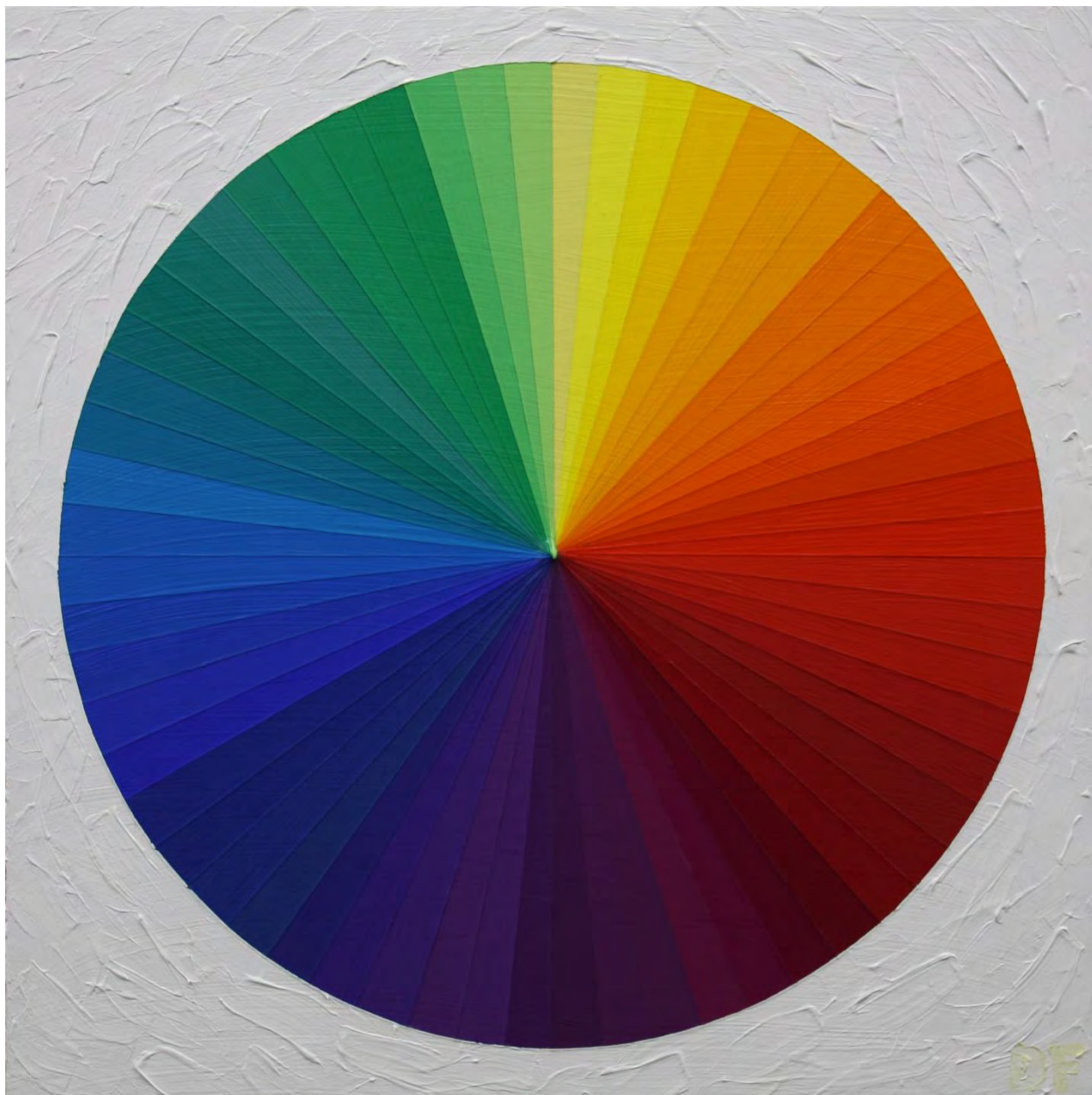
**Song of Breath** – December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006

To make a painting is to cry as the baby cries upon creation the eternal song of breath. You feel this certain weight, a heaviness pressing in on all sides, then, finally you decide to let go and to exhale. Tears such as marks represent different emotions – blunt emotions such as sadness and happiness and finer emotions not finished by words. When the painting has stopped the heaviness is lifted and breathing comes freely. Sentimentality is without for it is in this act that we are renewed.



Inspiration #20: A Light Heart, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches





Spectrum, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 27 x 27 inches

### **Sound and Light**

Sound and light, the ultimate equivalence???

Music surrounds us at a venue... at this one, from Lamy's in downtown Sedalia! Now, I beg you to contemplate light and its refraction, reflection, and absorption from off of the paintings' surfaces? Cooling? Warming, even. Does it also, surround, giving life.

## Space and Entity: Obstacle & Void

Space as an entity is what I am most interested in within my recent nonobjective works: in obstacle and void space. For when one places planes side by side as the Egyptians would depict figures, there are spaces between the planes that create space. Space as an entity is to say space as a totality. Composition is foremost significant to creating the space I am after. To achieve void space in a painting one must at least place a full field of painted color, or one of neutral or achromatic color, against a wall. The Color Field artists achieved pure void space without interruptions to the space. Hans Hofmann, on the other hand, is known for his push-and-pull space which predates color field space. Push-and-pull space is when at least two planes or the plane and the void interchange: that is, when one element comes forward the other recedes and vice versa. And I would say Malevich accomplished it long before Hofmann did. In 1913 with Malevich's black and white Suprematist drawings on paper, and more specifically and deliberately with his drawing entitled, "Movement of the Suprematist Square, producing a new bi-planar suprematist element." But how does one create a space where the planes are static and the void is not? In other words, how does one create a new space that is not the space already achieved by the Color Field artists or by the Action Painters of the 40's and 50's, or by Malevich in 1913? Well, it would seem that William Perehudoff did so as early as the 80's in Toronto.

By now, it seems to me that push-and-pull has already been surpassed by Robert Ryman as well, who moved beyond this kind of space with a rougher planar surface that keeps you interested in the surface itself without the illusion of moving into void space. So, moving beyond Ryman too, I accomplished what I am calling Obstacle and Void space for the first time when I was 19 years old, intuitively and by accident. Or at least I came close to it. I had no conception of it at the time, verbally, but I do now. I created a painting that at this moment hangs in a Catholic School Library in Kansas City, Bishop Miege (As seen in the picture following the essay.) There, in this painting, you can see a textured rectangle of color that is an elevated surface in three dimensions, a relief component in and on the painting, not totally unlike Ryman's use of texture, except that I exaggerated the elevation of the rectangular relief to a degree beyond what Ryman tended to do in his paintings. The space behind the rectangular relief created the illusion of void space. But I have, in my pursuit, created a cleaner and flatter example of this kind of space. Finally, I have reduced the space I am describing to its essence and it now may function wherein the Obstacle and Void are each flat within the painting existing on the same two-dimensional plane. No interchange occurs between the two spatially; this is to say the red "Obstacle" is fixed and appears floating just above the turquoise "Void" that you can illusionistically move into. Like a boulder blocking your path, the red "Obstacle" stands in front of the turquoise "Void," which is akin to the area behind the boulder. It doesn't look like much because it's such a natural phenomenon in the world, but in artwork it is very rare to see a plane (the red and white column) that does not interchange or flip-flop spatially with its background

(the turquoise). There are many naturalistic landscape paintings where it seemingly occurs but, through nonobjective means, it has taken me since 2006 (when I coined the terminology to better articulate this kind of space) to reduce it to its most direct means. You would be surprised how difficult it was to do. And, in 2019, I became acquainted with William Perehudoff's works which, to me, would be the very first inklings of it. I saw hints here and there until now, but they weren't what I wanted. Nonobjectively it's very difficult to get beyond push-and-pull or surface space, like Ryman's use of space, without using representation or cheap tricks, like drop shadows in nonobjective paintings. It's taken me hundreds of paintings and works on paper to achieve it.

Another good example of Obstacle and Void space, for the sake of clarity, comes in the movie *The Aviator* with Leonardo DiCaprio. If you've seen the movie you will likely recall the cloud scene when the director is trying to get airplanes to look as if they are moving in a sky scene. DiCaprio's character discovers that when filming the airplanes flying without clouds, there appears to be no movement or depth to them at all. He discovers that, without the counterforce of the clouds, everything gets flattened out and appears unnatural, unlike in real life. Well, Obstacle and Void space works similarly. It helps to have an active field of marks behind the Obstacle to demonstrate movement and depth. It also helps to have color resonance between the two, the Obstacle and Void, wherein the two elements appear united but separate.

Now, as for a more prescient historical grounding of space I would like to mention the intellectuality of Barnett Newman's vertical stripes he called "zips" with their hard edges that spanned his canvases from edge to edge, top to bottom, and acted to divide the paintings into planes of space that go back and come forward. And I would also like to mention Mark Rothko's more atmospheric void spaces. The "zips" in Newman's paintings hold you out as well as in. The push and pull as it was, interchanges spatially. And in this way, they never really got beyond Malevich's idea of bi-planar suprematist elements or Hofmann's same idea of push-and-pull in color. Nor do the works of Blinky Palermo who never, from what I've seen and can tell, used atmosphere to his advantage. In a different way, Rothko's voids let you in; they are complete spatial infinity and atmosphere. Newman's paintings are akin to push-and-pull on a larger scale than Hoffman's.

In essence, what I have done is to isolate Newman's "zips" in such ways as to not divide my canvases, stopping them short on each end, floating them over Rothko's voids in standalone pieces. But, it's not that simple. I am not quoting art history directly or parodying its styles. The pieces have a feel unique to themselves, unique to me, sincere, and have come about naturally, spontaneously, and slowly within my practice.

I'm bringing in color theory as well. In so far as I'm indebted to Itten and Albers, as well as to my dad for his thorough understanding of naturalistic color palettes. The Obstacles and Voids are working together in beautiful and surprisingly



sensual ways. Their qualities feel different but together. This, thankfully, softens the otherwise intellectual nature of the works. There is an emotive quality from them so far, and this emotive quality seems to be stemming from the centering and placement of the Obstacles atop the Void spaces. A very wholesome feeling is achieved by them, yet, of course, there is a mystery to them as well. There is a union at work, among them, a satisfying one. Was I less versed in color, the Obstacles and the Voids would be less connected to each other and more anonymous or arbitrary in feeling.

One thing that I have found out about making the paintings is that buffering the pure color of the Voids with a little earth tone has helped. It knocks the edges off the purity of the manufactured colors straight from their jars and subdues the acidity of the pure colors. It helps to create a deeper space. Also, I am layering them. Their surfaces are built up in three to four coats of paint by using transparent layers of acrylic and interference colors. The interference colors are suspended between a surface coat and an outer coat of paint. This helps to calm the artificiality of the interference layer yet creates depth and reflectivity beneath the outer layer. Also, the sides and edges are left raw on the pieces.



Obstacle and Void I: Red and Turquoise, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches





Square Painting, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 46 x 46 inches

### **Speed, and Living**

My mom and dad are always complaining, harping on me that I need to relax and to work less. They say, “You need to take breaks.” I work constantly. It’s been my way for as long as I can remember. My dad instilled a great work ethic in us at a young age. In me especially, I would say, since I am in the same profession as him, a professional studio artist.

The difference is entirely generational, it appears. And, foremostly, the difference is a speed thing, metabolic speed, as Paul Virilio would say in his essays on speed and technology. You see, them being much older and me younger, naturally there is a metabolic speed difference in our pace of living, but there are other factors to it as well. The internet plays a roll in the speed of our communications, iPhones, cellular phones, iPads, laptops; all technological devices made to harness speed and communications among other things. So, everyday living puts me at risk with them by way of my willingness to stay abreast of things technologically, to a degree as well as my living with them. Everyday life moves fast and so do I. My rate at which paintings are made superimposes restrictions on my living. The demands of the world we live in does. Therefore, I've been slowing down. After all, my parents are retired, so, what can you expect from them, aside perhaps love, AND, my dad's desire weekly it seems for another Saturday!

### **Spiritual and Ethereal Light Subverts, The Scientific!**

In the world there is two forms of light! Spiritual and scientific, and ethereal Light! The spiritual and ethereal subverts the scientific. Ethereal is the combination of the two!

### **Spirituality of the Mind**

I have visions constantly... guides in visual formations. Upon my inward eye expedient blips of images appear as I live my life. I don't now see any real reason I shouldn't call them messages and regardless of my knowing where they come from, they ARE spiritual. I don't see why we can't call them that. Connected to my life, they are! At times, I paint them. Unless a feeling of negativity from within arises from my decision to. The mind, is the mind. Information travels fast, in blips, one could say, that inform me as to my path at any moment. I used to wonder if I would ever be able to describe the feeling. A certain spiritual visualization has depth, meaning, vibes that come with it! To me, it's not an apparition... though the images can be faint upon the inward eye. I believe mind is the temple for their production, yet their connection be it to others likewise feels deepest spiritually. The heart is its doorway.

### **Square Painting**

I paint within a square format. The square is equal on all sides, therefore a symbol of freedom, of equality, nonhierarchical. Was there a hierarchy to it I would say it's in the middle. I see them as a centering vehicle, square paintings. It is also the representation of entrapment and enclosure. The saying goes, "think outside of the box," but in reality we cannot, just as we ourselves cannot escape our body and mind. Freedom is within in the box, and we as individuals may function this way inside of the world, amongst society. There is no escape from external boundaries so we accept them and do our best to wonder freely within our own mind. To rebel is a waste of

energy. Acceptance takes a turn inward to recognize our own boundaries. Once we begin to recognize these, our expression appears effortless, and is effortless. This is the pursuit of inner freedom. The square, with its equal and opposing sides gives false life to opposites, relativity. What appears to be opposite is not really opposite or relative; it is connected and complementary. This connectedness or equality gives life to simplicity and singularity, the individual standing alone. The person who stands alone, who is detached, is most aware of their inseparable bond with things. If we think small, the square is a body and the goings on within the square are of the mind, and this is inner freedom. If we think greater, the square is the world and the goings on within the square are of all things. If we think beyond great and small, beyond relationships and toward purity, the square is a square and “I” no longer exists. The truth is, that all of this and much more may be found in the work. It is a square, it is a mirror, it is ten thousand things, and because it is all of this, it is nothing at all, entirely selfless and thingless.

### **Stability, A Clear Mind, and The Woodshop**

I look at my life and what I know is that I’m better alone. Without a mate. Art is my life. It takes a clear mind. So, I am involved mentally and physically. I am involved with the work, my work. The work of the world. All the time I am involved when I am alone and all the time when I am not because art is my focus. For me, it narrows the distractions and the confusion of life. I’m not dependent on another’s life to guide mine in this way. I don’t have the ups and downs and struggles because of another’s emotional correspondence or lack thereof with me. Nor am I confused by another’s actions, because I am alone. Now, when you are alone there is only your mind to confuse you. I’m learning. All the time I am learning. The difficulties are tremendous at times, but, all the time I am resting and working on a stable mind frame. A stable life. The work helps. I can identify with my work and see when to rest and when not to. When the mind is moving fast it is not so easy. I like to rest then, to sit, and do little and wait for the speedy mind to pass. Labor, if the mind is not moving so quickly, is good. Time spent doing manual labor, the building of stretchers is good. Yes, a good day in the woodshop to settle the body into a routine of laborious activity bids well for the mind. It slows the mind and feels rewarding – with direct tangible results. There is something to be said about making a right angle, a perfect ninety-degree corner. Better yet, four corners at ninety-degrees, each. It makes one feel right, like the corners, like something has been accomplished.

Starting building in the woodshop is very difficult at times. What one realizes is that the building of the wooden stretchers begins often after the completion of an artwork or after multiple artworks have been completed in a row. It comes after a tremendous momentum of effort, after time spent painting. There is frequently down time between the completion of artworks and the building of new stretchers. This can be a brief period of repose or a sustained upset of sorts, as one is not always prepared with an inspiration to move forward onto the next size and shape of stretcher. One must regain momentum after a stop like that. So, it begins slow in the woodshop until one reaches his or her pace. This, I am working on. Painting is the most glorious activity for me, the height of the crescendo, but again, there is something to be said for manual labor to ease the mind like a soothing balm to the skin, or a perfectly matched scent to one’s mood.



The Wood Shop in the Studio, 2019

## State of the Arts

As I sit reading Robert Motherwell's writings I'm pleased and saddened. Pleased in his great personal insights, yet, saddened by his connection to other painters of his time. When writing, he often would use "we" and "our" and "us" when referring to common or uncommon ideas pertaining to his "group" of friends. While I do have friends who are artists, not all are painters, and even those who are painters aren't necessarily sharing my concerns, save the notion of trying to get exhibitions and to reach a broader audience. This, we all have in common.

But, it saddens me because either I haven't yet understood our collective concerns as painters in the present day no matter how disparate our styles, or, what's worse, we have very few collective concerns. It is my feeling that all too often in today's art world and world at large, one person's gain is another's loss. It would seem that this is evidence of a country disjunctive and detached on the human level. It strikes me as a danger and a concern. Now, this feeling may stem from my current relative isolation having moved from New York City to Sedalia, Missouri, a city of 22,000. Or, it's evidence that the isolation I feel is pervasive to most or all artists in the U.S.

I tend to agree with Terry Winters when he said, “Painting is this culture’s folk art, it’s still made by hand and it’s something that’s understood as a consequence of one person’s activity.” I would go further to say that “abstract” painting is this culture’s folk art, sidelined at least for the time being. And to go further would be to herald not one type of art over another as the dominant style of our time, but to praise all different styles as equally relevant.

Part of me loves the romantic notion that we are all individuals and have something to say different from one another, and that’s truth. And likewise, that our styles are different. But, I also believe in a collective conscious and in the all mighty idea exemplary of past times of art history that there must have been “something in the air” combining to a degree most painters of an era.

Of course, I’ve been writing generically so far, and perhaps to be more exact one would have to cite examples of specific pieces by different artists to prove what I’m saying, that we’ve “lost connection” with one another, so to speak. But alas, I don’t have the time at present moment to go into such depth, and maybe not even the temperament to do so if I wanted to. And maybe that’s the problem in the end. Where has time gone? Just know I won’t be calling you to collect your thoughts or honking my horn in front of your home to go have a real conversation about it. It’s time to post it on the “internet.”

### **Statement on my Abstractions**

When I paint abstractly my paintings are inspired. What I mean by this is that my process is internal. I see a vision of which I sketch out. An abstracted vision. Usually, what I perceive to be the inspiration comes to me in grey and is a structure of proportions on which the color comes afterwards. But sometimes the original inspiration is in color, a colored grid. A tiny sketch or drawing is made at that time. Once the sketch is finished, I work out the size in my head and write it down. Perhaps the sketch leads to a sudden inspiration of color that also gets written down. From that point forward I prepare to paint and sometimes the inspirations come to me, spontaneously! And in all actualities, this is the part, nowadays I don’t think as much about the plan. It happens spontaneously. I just start!

### **Structure and Void**

There are two things I know about in this world, and this is the need for structure and void. The world needs structure currently. With so much tumultuous activity politically we need structure. So, I have provided it within these works. But also, void space. The resilience of space. The epic spaces in between lush with color, weeping colors. Without structure one cannot perceive the void.

It begins with structure and ends in voids, my paintings do. A void. A softened space. Yet, a gesture lingers for miles. A simple gesture of the brush. For miles and miles within it might resonate. My gesture... a simple gesture. And it is present in these works.

So, all in all, these paintings are about color, structure, void, and gesture. Their vibe is subtle to me, yet strict in its design. Most of the paintings begin guided by an inner inspiration that comes to me, a visualization of form. From there, I begin to write it down. I sometimes work on a blank sheet of paper but at other times on graph paper. I like the grid, it pleases me. Structure is necessary when building my paintings. When graphing the visuals. I have inspirations mostly in color. It is always about depicting the inspiration as closely as I can!

You see, in this way it is not me, not my hand guiding what comes to mind, only my will drawing it out. So, yes, it is me. But something else is part of the process, something unknown. And I think this spirit is where it's at. That part, the spirit of the work is what it's all about, to me. A softened tone at most times, in recent days.

Apollonian Versus Dionysian  
Good versus evil  
Order versus chaos  
Harmony versus disharmony  
Structure versus Unstructured

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Balance

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Apollonian and Dionysian  
Good versus evil  
Order and chaos  
Harmony versus Disharmony  
Structured and unstructured

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Balance

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Good and Evil  
Harmony and Disharmony  
Order and Chaos  
Apollonian and Dionysian  
Utopian and dystopian  
Structure and Void

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Balanced!

Structure and Void!

A Studio Notation, written on August 14, 2019 (A procession of thoughts worked out in writing, with a concept in mind. Only to arrive, at Structure and Void for the exhibition title.)

—Written by Damon Freed for the occasion of an exhibition by Damon Freed, titled “Structure and Void,” on September 28, 2019.

## **Survival of the Fittest**

There will come a time when you must fight. I hope there does not, but there will. Your instincts will kick in and you might kill to protect another or to protect yourself. Whether it comes after being stung by a bee, or a wasp, or from being bitten by a spider, or a snake, you will protect yourself. And that is just being human. Wars, no, wars are another thing altogether. They are decided on by the many. And that, that is democracy. It is a vicious beast, democracy is. It wants to decide instead of waiting. It wants to decide. It is designed this way, toward an end goal. It seeks results not outcomes. And it is dangerous, but so is getting stung.

## **Taoism and Buddhism**

Was I to subscribe to a religion, it would be Taoism. Was I to practice a faith, Buddhism. Taoism, to me, is the most unlike a religion of all religions. The most ambiguous and abstract among them. In Taoism, there is speak of heaven and god, but little detail is given to describe such things. There is and never has been an exclusive God image attached to Taoism, unlike Buddhism. The Buddha represents the one. The one Buddha that is in all who obtain the Buddha Way. There is a look attached to it. Yet, even still, I am fond of its practice. The ritualistic aspects are pleasant to me. Every aspect aside from, “the slap,” is flawless to me. Buddhism, like Taoism, is also quite abstract in its teachings and lessons. Taoism, or, the “Way,” is beautiful. Zen is not beautiful, but it is a great compliment in its ugliness to Taoism. I would almost characterize Taoism as feminine, and Buddhism as masculine. Therefore, Taoism, naturally, is the more challenging of the two, for me. I would be mistaken if I did not say that by nature I am more Zen like. The aggression of Zen, what lies deep in its root, and the long-sustained practice of extinguishing that aggression, I identify with. Some say that you never reach Nirvana, but, I disagree. The Way, or Taoism, on the other hand can be grasped in part, and the same with Nirvana, in this life. What I love about both religions is that they believe one may reach enlightenment and, thereby, hope is at their core.

## **Tape**

There is a stigma in painting that a taped edge is a “mechanical” way of working. I am guilty of describing the use of tape this way as well. But, I am realizing the absurdity in feeling this way. Once you move beyond it one realizes that the tape is no more mechanical than using a brush or a stick or your hands, or any “tool” to merit your results. We are human, the subtleties sneak in regardless. After all, we humans made such a thing as tape, just as we made the brush, and tubed paint, and rulers, etc. We created it. So, tell me again... what’s the big idea?



## **The Abstract Expressionist's Are Well, in Their Way**

In my mind, there are a few artists I associate, with. Shawn Powell, the artist's artist... a man after my own heart. Jim, well, Jim comes in first. He's the bee's knees, and a pal a mine! Maybe the best of them. Ol' Mathew Mahler comes in next, under Jim. And then there's me. A fine young man. Also, my dad. There are a few others of course, but the essential three are worth mentioning by name. Now, Graigor, ol' Graigor is worth mentioning as well. Because the son of a bitch is an illustrator and an artist, painting with the best of us. Emotive representations of the ol' games. And that's to name a few.

The rest, well, is the rest, to me. And, I'm forgetting someone, I know I am... just below the surface. You know, a little estranged from the bunch. But, it's not worth mentioning. Because well, he prefers to be known that way. But, his name is Matt. As well.

There are a few others. Those in this city who I associate with. But NYC pulls on me often, for help. And so do I, them.

Now, Mahler is the society, cat. Jim is the one. And, Shawn is the best of them. You see, it changes, from time to time. And, should I give credit where credit is due, Mahler sacrifices himself for the sakes of others, the most! But, I tell you, he's the strongest, so he can identify with themselves. And Shawn, well, he goes on and on, into the sunset's rays. Jim, into the sunsets and their chroma. Like the science of the sunspots on Main. But aren't we all stubborn like a curmudgeonly old man. So the sons of bitches can speak for themselves next time! Love you, three amigos.

Heh, heh, heh.

## **The Ancient Dwells in Mystery**

It is not this way or that way. It is this way and that way. And every way you need it to be! Because, there is no because.

## **The Ancients are Modern as Well, and We are Them**

The truth is, life exists beneath all the superficial permissions of day and night on this Earth. It takes a slowing down within the mind to notice the voices, soft and quiet, teaching us to see. I have heard these voices at times guiding us on into lifetimes beyond our own absence from this place. Up there, beyond the stars that one sees in the distant nighttimes. Lifetimes coming and going, here and there, ever-evolving, circular, linear, horizontal in nature, moving forward, backwards, and straight. Lifetimes coming and going near and far beyond our Earth, distant shadows that speak, full of light once approached in some dream down the road, and once

apprehended presently, somehow, in today's world, here, on this planet, within the mind. A dream that isn't a dream, just like illusions aren't really illusions at all. A color that is seen in the mind, its presence comes forth, but lacks an earthen weight to it that most wouldn't recognize or speak of. A color that wasn't painted on but comes forth, stemming from our current movements on this Earth, yet the ancients speak to us through its action, and into the languages of the future it goes, its processes, doing its proper rite, communicating what is called upon or created for them to perfect. The reality is this, I'm here, I'm there also. Vessels are we, dimensions in time, and space isn't real. Except that I can feel and time the movement of the itch of my too long beard from this keyboard to now. Ancient are we. Modern are we. Communicate with them, yourselves, and us. It's good. Just be brave.

## **The Artist**

I am here to get this off my chest. The critics would have it that "we," the artists, do not control the statement of our work. Of course they would say this, because, otherwise, they would have no job. As for the common spectators of our work, it is similar, but the artwork is allowed to function more freely than it does when critics write about it. It is the artist's job to make work above all things. To paint. Some work from childhood onward, very few, but some I imagine with more or less no notions behind the work beyond the work itself. This might be the purest development of the self by way of artwork that one could find in the world, but I have not seen it, yet. Others are schooled. They seek support. They seek the education of forms through governing of those forms and ideas. Therefore, I say, I control the statement of the work, fundamentally, by choosing to work and to be aware. Yet, the subconscious is a misunderstood thing. Information goes into the paintings beyond the artist's control, at times. Slips through, uncodified by thinking or awareness of the substance with which the artist is attempting to control. Call it accidental, call it what you may, but if you shut down this part of the act of making this means you have stopped working! For, the allowance of art to be art is to allow for the hope of sublimation. Information beyond our control passes through us into our mediums controlled by us in degrees of thinking, furthermore, informing our viewers beyond our controlling efforts. This substantial, yet uncontrollable aspect of artmaking is why I say art is not religion. It naturally, is set apart from dogma by default. Whether for good or for worse, it is by its own creation that mysterious forces align. And the artist and viewer may go unaware of these forces for many days, months, or years before the 'message' of the work is revealed to others. Therefore, these days, I just work, mostly.

And one last thing. To say the artist does not understand his own message does not mean that the power of understanding goes to the critics, historians, or people also living during his times. Neither may get it. Or some may get it. Either way, posterity is kind!

## **The Artist is Not a Diplomat**

The artist recognizes the many voices surrounding his own. He stands tallest among them. He must. It is his duty to recognize in himself what drives his own sensibility. The closer he is to knowing the better off he will be. Now, this doesn't mean he has to go around shouting it from the rooftops, what he knows about himself, but, subtly, steadily, and graciously he may. And should he speak up about some embitterment on a subject, let it be heard, and question why he is doing as much. Perhaps it is a solemn point of view on a subject. Perhaps not. You will discover the truth about him should your questions be directly to the point. Then, and only then, may you know what drives the artist.

## **The Arts and Technology**

I don't sweat technology too much because I don't have children, I am no longer an educator, and the reality is, art has always been ahead! Yeah, yeah, a cave man you might call me, but this is the brass tacks of it all... I've been engaged with them both my entire life, technology and art. No instrument of technology has ever come close to the visualizations created by, artworks. Perceptual reality is manipulated by them, by artworks, to extreme departure from reality, it would seem, at times, but really, art is just that advanced, and IS the reality. I offer you moments in history wherein our perceptions have been altered majorly. The big ones starting with modernity and Monet... tiny dots or swaths of color placed side by side to create depth and illusion, then with the Fauves... a flattening of space accompanied by arbitrary placement of colors, then with Cubism... the construction of multiple viewpoints and angles of an object in space (an object or a figure seen from all sides existing at once), then with Kandinsky who was a Fauve prior to his turning a painting of his upside down unintentionally thereby recognizing in it a certain fascination (perceptual advancement by way of nonobjective painting), Surrealism and Dali... the illusionistic at its height in degrees created by the melding of objects into one another, in space, and then on and on it goes until NOW! And before these guys you had many advancements as well. So, really, when I hear about new technology, I get bored quickly, because well, my work is also perceptual! And, there simply are more imaginative and realistic components to what I do that make sense to me in advance of culture's investigations into technology. As I've said before, we as artists, well, some of us as artists, are in advance of real-life technologies, this is to say, our thoughts, and work is.



Inspiration #21: Joy, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 30 x 30 inches

## **The Book**

Each flower as fertile and futile as the next. Each human as happy and depressed. Every grain of sand part and parcel to the process of life. And may he let me go in rest and may he let me go in strife – for I do not sharpen the edge that is the knife, nor the chef and nor the rife cook does this. He does this and I in turn am fed upon words and letters that shape his book.

## The Blackbird

I have a small gripe. In 1914-15 Kazimir Malevich painted “Black Square.” Before that time, in 1913, he drew it. Now, many would like to believe with all the hype surrounding the Hilma af Klint exhibition that was held at the Guggenheim that she was the first person to paint nonobjectively. But, this is what I have to say... what most are forgetting is context! He defined what he did in writing, as well. He demonstrated not only the first black square, but, the admonishment of what he had done. God at His finest.

## The Concern and Consciousness of Beauty

First, I would like to not equate beauty with prettiness here. Let’s go beyond that into a deeper realm of art making. I would like to lay out the foundations of prettiness and ugliness as the mere *base* operations of beauty. Also, it is worth it to lay out the Greek ideal of perfection. Beauty as perfection. The striving toward it in artwork. I would like to say that this position of striving is impossible, as, each artwork we create, *no matter how hard we strive*, is perfect on some level.

As Barnett Newman stated years ago, “...the sublime consists of a desire to destroy form, where form can be formless.” Well, we do not “destroy” form. We create form. And in the creation of it form can be formless without its destruction and is this way. The tragic stance isn’t necessary for it to come into being and nor is the comedic. The looking down at the common man, or the exacerbation from the common individual. An attitude of pure feeling *is* necessary, no matter the attitude. One should realize that states of *pure feeling*, can and are achieved without necessarily becoming categorical.

The “reality of sensation” as Barnett Newman puts it is always “a” starting point. Sensation as a visceral charge, as emotive of sensual elements can be. The physicality of paint responded to by way of tactility, vision, fragrance, auditory, and sensations of taste. Responding with our senses in other words. From there, comes feeling of sensations that are nonobjective and a reality. And dare I say all artwork is nonobjective in response. And really, it is hard to get beyond these sensations. But, from time to time, something new is created. And from there, we take a step forward into a perfect state of being— and into a *new* state of being responding with sensations, feelings, emotions, and thoughts of being refreshed.

It doesn’t matter how realistic or nonrepresentational your artwork is, it is a catalyst of sensations, thoughts, and feelings. Therefore, transcendent responses occur no matter the artwork experienced if the artwork indeed forges ahead. And in doing so it takes a natural attitude of synchronicity to life. We ARE nature, as Jackson Pollock said of himself years ago as well as the Taoists long before him. Beauty is neither separate from us (found in exterior nature), nor is beauty found in the absence of nature or beyond nature. Beauty takes a synthesis of us and nature together since there is no separation.

Surely, we have all felt the levity of having looked at something new, the experience of something newly made, something very progressive. The experience is like no other. A pleasure all unto itself. I am unsure if thought even enters into this kind of experience, actually. When having this kind of experience, it is full and robust in and of itself. It is only after we have experienced this kind of experience that we are able to consider its feelings with thinking or thought. So, in this sense, we are caught in its pull for a time and its pull is a positive experience, always. And we refer to it as beautiful! The feeling is one of successful artworks and of successful moments of attitude.

## **The Crisis of Abstraction, On the Works of Mary Weatherford**

In 2012, it would be such, that Mary Weatherford's glowing (literally) abstractions were acclaimed. A clever alignment of Morris Louis via Helen Frankenthaler's work and Dan Flavin's work seems to be composed into an enticing experience of shock value! Yep, that's about it.

Funny, how the forms we make are synthesized from art history in such quotable fashionistas work. Post-Modernism at it's ashamedly best! Ugh.

Enticing, yes, troubling even more so! To think of all the tools one has at his or her disposal as artists, better yet, as painters, and to only come up with this – is nonsense, and to be praised for it to the degree she has been, even more nonsensical! But, it's catchy, I'll give her that!

But don't you wish there was more to talk about in the work, I do. So, what is it with the world today that it necessitates flashy objects in front of paintings of this sort? Well, is it because the world is in distress, perhaps from the quick fixes going 'round in every walk of life! I mean, soon there will be time saving in reading text on a page, as well! Hah! Surely you know the best sellers, don't you. Yes, it's too late there, as well... so who you gonna call, is my question to you! When it's too late.

Jesus, well, start there. Or somewhere else where it should be found, like, in the ARTS! Not in a dazzling light show nor in an escapade of bedazzlement, and banter!

## **The Dumbing Down**

"No one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the common individual," to quote my father. I've never heard this quote outside of him using it, but, tonight, I would like to write this quote down and to say it again and again to myself in solitude. And to use it wisely, is the answer of the millions. It's not about the money to me, it's about the hopelessness in its phrasing. *In my way*, I have been perhaps overly optimistic. Not in line with the common man's understanding of abstraction. I've spent a lot of time teaching the common individual how to consider my work. A lot of time hoping they would understand. But, they have not. People have not understood the work therefore the work has not sold. And trust is an issue here. Now, I make other work that has sold as they connect with it. The other side of my work is selling, and it



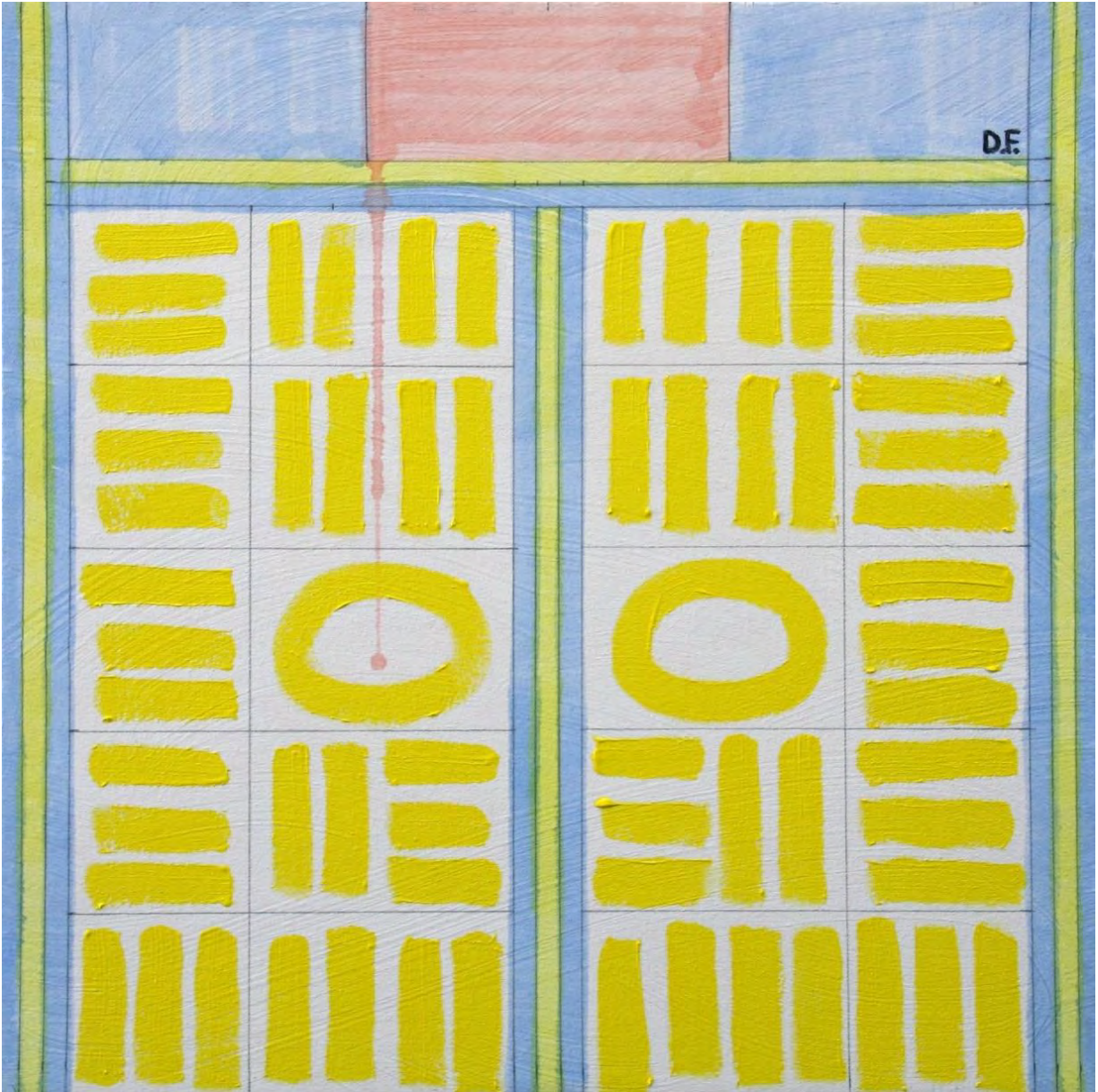
frustrates myself because it's not the work. Like so many easily grasped commodities my landscapes are accessible, my portraits are accessible. Easily graspable. And it frustrates me to see so many people enjoying the dumbing down. I set out one day with an idea in my mind to paint from nature and from drawings of people, to relieve myself from the stresses of the studio, to go outside fancy free with charcoal in hand like a little boy and to bring something back for the others to see. And it frustrates myself. It frustrates myself that the others don't understand the investment I've made into the work. The work that has been done. The well-earned hardships endured by me.

And it's not the beating my head against a wall that bothers me so much, I love what I do with abstraction. This is where the trust needs to come in. By nature, nonobjective abstraction thwarts understanding because in my world it is my love of one's self. But it is love of the universal self. Therefore, it is so difficult for me to understand why the people aren't connecting to the paintings. It's about an experience firsthand. An experience of the world and the artist. What bothers me is that people are unwilling to experience life, perhaps that's it. People want a painting that is easily graspable. They need a storyline. At least they need something of fact or fiction that makes sense to them to look at in the paintings – something apparently visible as an object of understanding, a fantasy, escape, storyline, or arrival. Understanding, they feel, depends on it. But as I've said before, experience before understanding. Experience leads to understanding. So many are unwilling to bend on this. So many are unwilling to sacrifice the security of "not-knowing" in exchange for "finding out" or for "discovery." So, where they always were, is where they will stand. They remain as if on the edge of what appears to be a vast forest of a different kind of knowing, never entering the wooded terrain. Never experiencing the unknown.

Therefore, I say it's a dumbing down. It's complacency. It's being "comfortable" with your surroundings. And if there is one thing wrong with our world today, it's this. The fact that we as a people are not expanding into the unknown. I mean, a few of us are. Our work forges ahead. Elon Musk seems to be exploring new ideas. He appears to be living his life in the wooded terrain, and in turn is expanding ever so brightly, into the darkened forest. And one day, perhaps others will also in turn.

And what about the artists, the other artists, working in solitude expanding into the unknown. I believe they must exist, they must. They do. I know they do. But, we as a people are not doing this. We are moving so, so slowly into what seems like a darkened vision of old values, old sentiments, old, old, old ways, tribal even, fictitious. With our political system in shambles, what are we doing? Left against right, this against that, fight, fight, fighting. Well, I'll tell you this, it's going to get a lot worse before it improves unless we do something about it as a people, together. And what we need is a wake-up call. An agenda. A president to show the common people, through bad example, what is wrong with the world today. A president who by no standards goes with the status quo and who will undoubtedly do great damage, but who, in his aftermath, will have demonstrated to us what is not to be done. This is our president, Donald Trump. And by the hand of gods, may some great light be shined on him, by our next president, to show what glory will be done.





Inspiration #22: Sensitivity, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches

## The Gallery

When the innocence of the artist goes unprotected, we have issues. The artist gets hers and his. When the artists play games, we have a problem. When others play games, even worse. Unless those games are employed out of innocence. Out of not knowing better, out of ignorance, and out of child's play is not excusable. This game is one of survival, therefore, not a game. Now, I don't expect to be treated as a prince or a king, but I expect an even exchange, a free flow of thought and money – the gallery system is the way it's been done for a very, very, very long while.

Now, I am no businessman but I am also not a fool. Upon waking from a dream yesterday of tomfoolery, I was alerted to the necessity of honesty within this system, the gallery system. One cannot be dumb about this. The dream was one of innocence, mostly. But, I found it particularly affecting in a negative way.

I was raised on the ins and outs of the gallery system. I know how it works quite well. But, things are rapidly changing. We are working with the internet to heighten sales and awareness of artwork. It's tricky some might think, but, it's noteworthy to mention the goings on now. Much effort is given to its process. It remains a semiotic relationship between dealers and artists, but it's difficult. Participation from the artist is necessary in the traditional way, in person, particularly when one's studio is located nearby. Otherwise, the effort is one of promoting the gallery online merely, and by word of mouth to family, friends, and acquaintances who live both near and far.

The most difficult aspect of this comes from my desire to have my work viewed in person prior to sales. I've had eight solo shows and many group shows to date. Even still, the reality is, much artwork gets purchased sight unseen based on the artist's reputation, or on having encountered the artist's work in person beforehand in a different context even. I trust that collectors are happy to do business this way, and that is ok by me. I, for one, would need to see the work in person beforehand. It's tough. Therein lies one of the difficulties of exhibiting an artist who is not located in the city the gallery is in, like me.

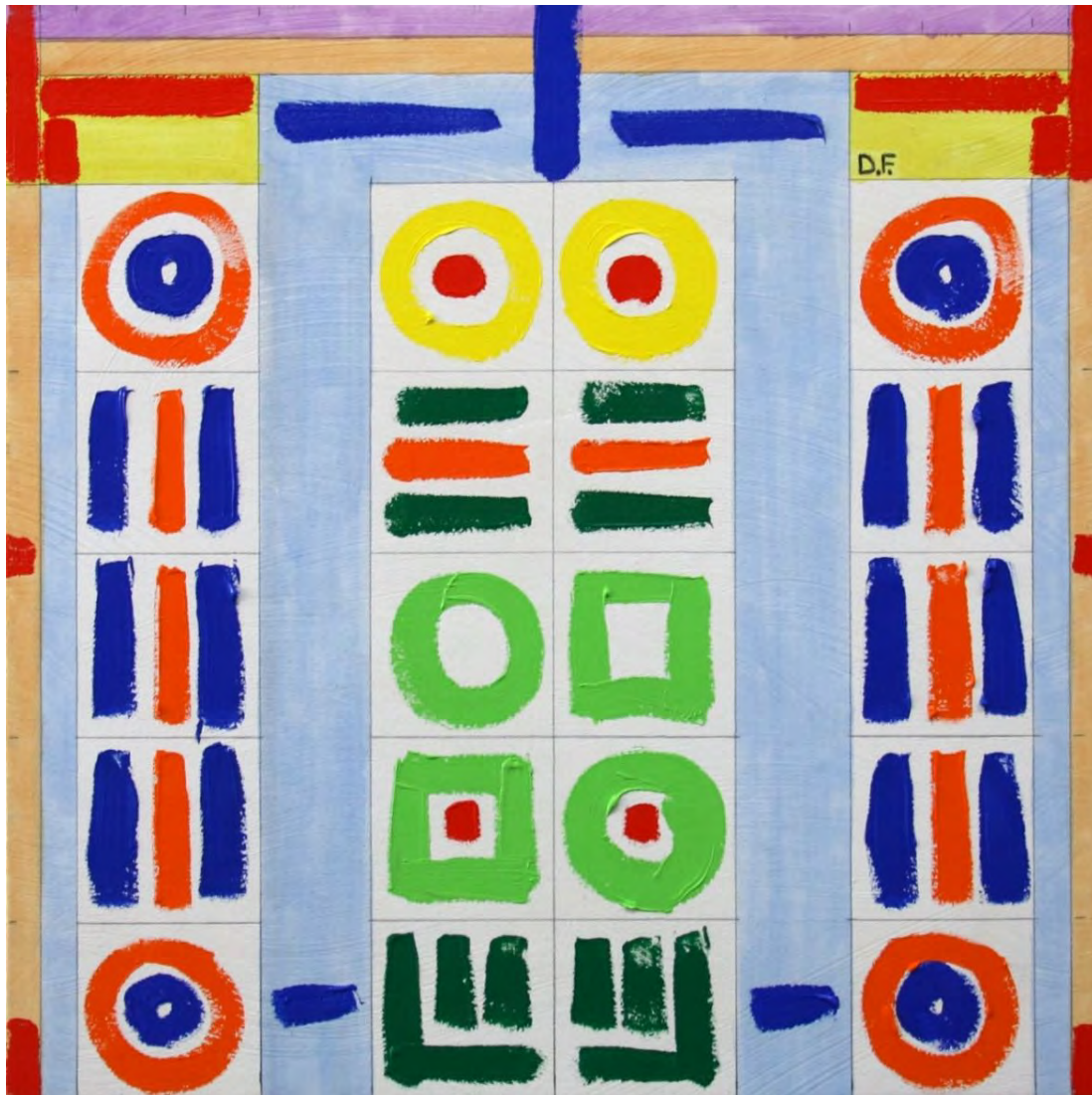
My studio is inaccessible and out of range, miles away. This is my current situation. Fortunately, I am within range for the occasional visit by the dealer. And am very thankful for this. But out of range for the buyer. Sales-wise, this means that I'm at a disadvantage to the collector from another city, at least from a proximity standpoint. Some collectors need access this way. I'm happy to treat the collectors of my work in this way, very happy, but it isn't my situation to do so. Thus, I do my best to promote gallery sales of my work online through my gallery.

## **The Gallery World**

It is so extremely difficult finding a gallery to represent your work. You have to look and look and look until you find the right one for your work. The proper placement in a gallery is crucial for the work to be seen, and to have any chance of getting it in the museums. And if you respect your work enough you will do just this. But damn, it is painful once found when looking to expand on showing your work throughout the gallery world. Hard to even know what to say about it, really, other than, if you don't live where you want to show – just know it's going to be really harder than it appears! You must be persistent, that much I know of. Which I have been myself, but even still, it doesn't work at most times. A real connection to the work is what I'm after from dealers, belief in the artist, belief in him or herself, belief in his or her team of artists. Showing their belief is crucial for their longevity as artists and dealers alike, I think. Of course, in this fake world of scams and one-offs, it's hard to know...

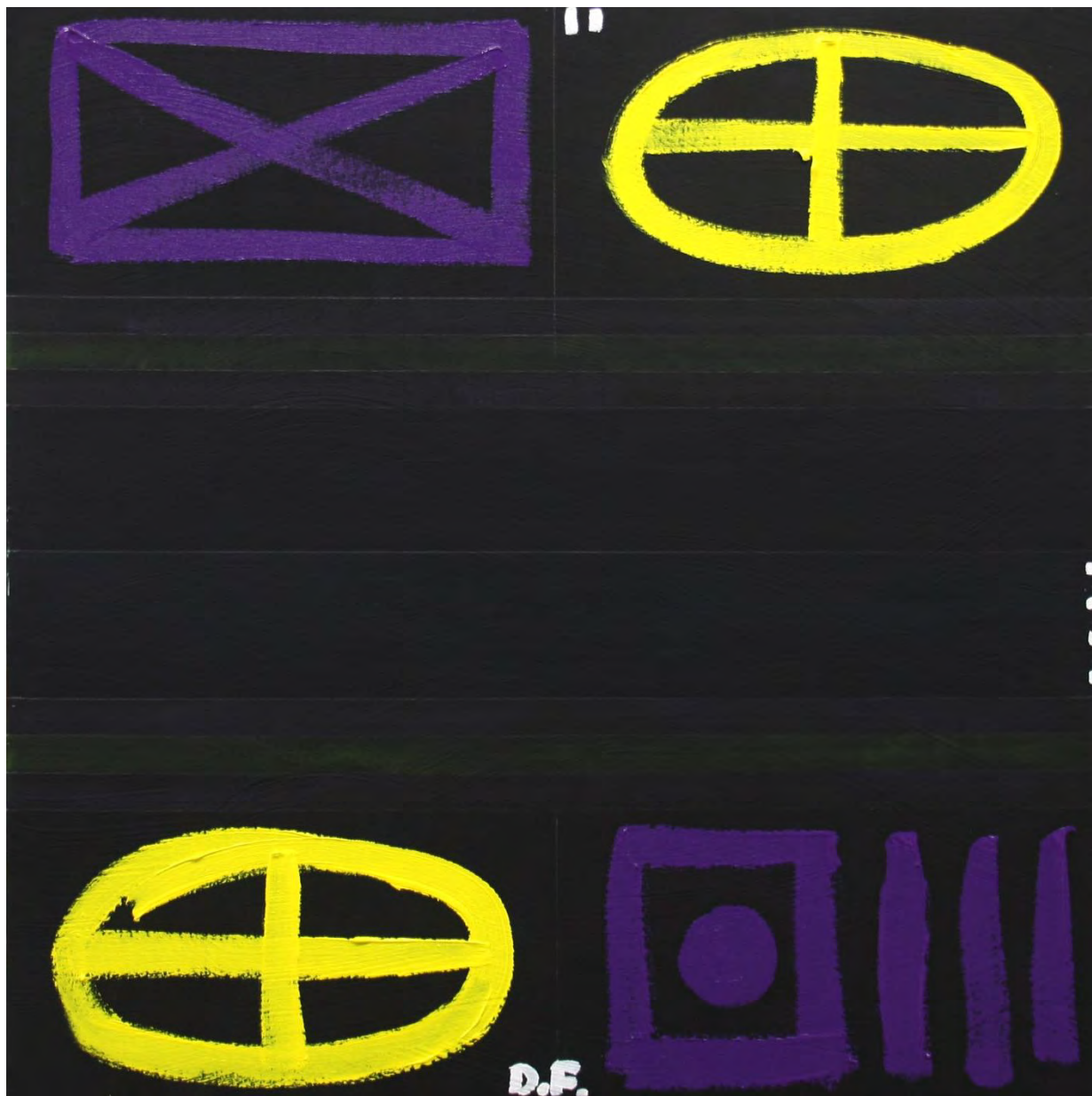
## The Gallery World of Business

In 2009, I set out to deal my work! The greatest ally you will ever find is yourself. So, I say be good at it the best you can be. Bruno David found me coming out of Hunter for graduate school. He played a part, in it! He helped to make my very first exhibition into something presentable to the public at Large! We are designers, together, so to speak, by now! Plus, by his doing so, he was beside me, supporting me, particularly when I needed his eyes on the work, to see the creations! So, by this, he was a fly on the wall, a vessel in his approach to it, mostly... every man and woman is by now, considering the leeway I allow them! And that is the best compliment I could give him, and others, at this time. I love him dearly, as a businessman, for his respect of what I do! He's a great individual and dealer to me. And to others!



Inspiration #22: A Playful Heart, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 30 x 30 inches





Inspiration #24: The Black Sheep, 2019, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 30 x 30 inches

### The Good Old Days

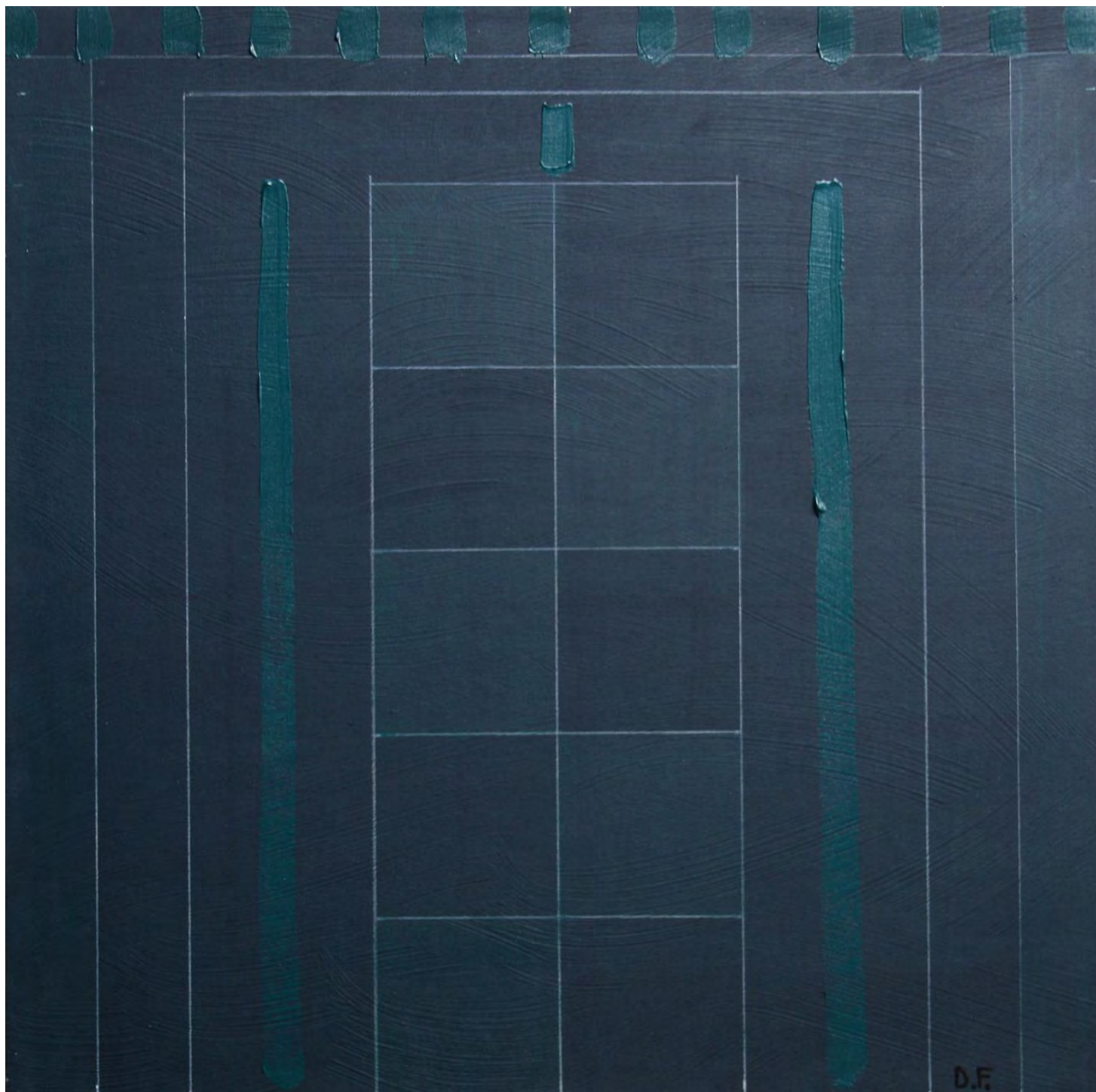
The radio is on in the studio playing some old songs and I'm reminded of young days in the woodshop by myself laboring to old tunes on the old radio upstairs where I built intricate wooden stretchers for my dad's paintings; just the wood, myself – a carpenter, and the glue, and the nails. And this was before compressors, automatic tools. Manual claw hammers and ball peen hammers and strength and sweat in the summers did the work with an occasional breeze from the propped up windows. Before air conditioning there were fans and every corner had to be

measured to a perfect 90 degrees and there were lots of corners and every horizontal had to be braced every 16 inches and down to a millimeter my mind and father's later attention would greet. Then, after routing the blonde wood beautiful as blondes in the summer in their curvy routered dresses with hips to knock you up to size I would carry them all downstairs, the stretchers, the blondes, like new life for me and my father to then rest and I made a little cash and would then maybe go get drunk with the boys at night where we greeted more blondes the kind that took labor of a different charming kind to hammer and to glue into beautiful picturesque beings of light that would hold you until morning and then take flight.



Inspiration #25: Virginity, 2019, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 30 x 30 inches





Inspiration #26: Apollo and Dionysus, 2019, Acrylic and Flashe on Canvas, 30 x 30 inches

## The Greeks

The idea of perfection comes to mind. The classical. The Greeks. The ideal that one can reach perfect form. The balance of Archimedes. The worth of Medusa. The feeling of Zeus. The value of an avalanche. The meaning of the masses? Protection from thyself. The meaning of thyself? Protection from the masses.

Three columns: one Doric, one Ionic, and one Corinthian. The empty base, the Doric, goes all the way to heaven. Perfect form.

A single architrave, enclosing nothing, extending beyond sight, to the corners of the earth it extends. Perfect form.

A painting, like the architrave, extending beyond sight to the left and right, straight as Apollo's arrow. Empty, breathless, taking nothing, and giving back. Like the gods of old, perfect symmetry, perfect form. Perfect form. This painting will be called, Family.

### **The Habitual Understanding**

The older generations can afford the art of others, God bless them for doing so! But darn if they aren't the one's running the shows. Years of routines engrained in them! And likewise, the artwork they like and want to grace walls of exhibitions! Ugh. We must go beyond this way of thinking to promote artists of worth. Innovation! Innovation! Innovation. Is what should drive artists who like these people! Turn it on their heads, go blue when you should've gone red. Eat sandwiches without, Thee Bread! And you might, just might be yourselves again. But I get it. Oh how I get it!

### **The Heroes Are Gone**

There was a time that heroes walked the earth. Men were good. Men who stood for something. Where have they gone to? No possession, no ownership, and they walked with purpose and modesty. They died for what they believed in, in others. In helping mankind. In making a difference. Not in monetary gain and possession, but in mental understanding of the world, of others. When their actions were of great consequence to themselves and to the people of the world. When action was not all. When conquest was not everything. When sitting, and thinking mattered. When waiting was not procrastination but part of the process of doing good. When waiting meant one believed in time, that it was of the essence, and that just cause mattered very much. That one needed a reason, or an inspiration to move forth. To do some good. Men who did not rush into everything out of desperation, or isolation, or loneliness. Men who were not self-sufficient, but tried to do their best, always. Who were not stubborn. Who could admit when they needed a hand in old age and in youth. Heroes were these men. And from them we are born. And from them we are warned. And into their respects we should go for new causes and in recognition of what has always been done right. A hero has courage. A hero may sit, alone, emptied of fear in the night, in the dark, and simply smile when the shadow play arrives. When the devil knocks three times at his door, because he knows to acknowledge him. And to be humble even in the presence of demons. Of darkness. Because he also knows that with him the light will greet the devil in solitude. Whether it be his mind at work or the thoughts of others that have pervaded his mind when he is doubting, a hero moves forward in patience and in strength. Into a new day. A bright day. Because love surrounds him.



## **The Inner Chapters: Balance IV**

Abstract Expressionism remains the pinnacle of American thought in artwork. Granted it was mostly by men at the time, we advanced the forms of thought and belief to a degree beyond past generations of self-worth. The decline began when Minimalists "purged" emotion from their work thereby defacing the self. It was a retreat from solid values, what the Europeans were so good at doing with Futurism. The negation of the past along with skewed chauvinism was awful. A neglect is readily apparent in the Minimalist aesthetic of clean, cold, pure geometric work, as well. And Pop art, it hardly even counts. Entirely caught up with fame, glory, and a flourishing of control through monetary gain from the sale of their art.

You see, thought must balance the emotions with the intellect! If this is possible. Now, the challenge is to possess each in singular works of art! So, get after it. Men and Women.

That's what I do when I paint nowadays. I don't think about it, I just do. It's not some grand schematic thinking I'm after, not some topical nonsense found on the news either. If there are topics I'm interested in there is really only one. The possibilities found in living. A living experience is what my paintings are recordings of! And these might just have a chance of offering an ecstasy of feeling to some through the vessels of thought.

If I have a responsibility to painting, it is to push my forms into existence; a unique advancement by way of personal discovery happens by moving forward with little time for looking back! Perhaps by way of personal progression, and through higher level thinking and feelings, but also, through notions of form that come down to us upon ways of our connection to history, and to people living today. It entirely depends on how you believe life to be.

Dimensions of reality exist to me. I don't see a lifespan as a fixed endeavor wherein we die and that's it. Transitions occur, are known to us in degrees of thought. How else would it be that these forms are brought to us? By myself, yes, but wherein throughout time am I located? The present, the future, the past? I mean, I just start painting these days and try not to worry as much.

I love the idea that shapes can express emotion. Just the shapes, imbued with gestures and colors. I like the shapes to not exceed the edges of a square format. Within the mind is where I reside at most times. The square represents my mind and the forms within are of varying tenor. Sometimes strong, at times they are weak.

Ultimately, they are physical and mental bonds throughout times. Psychophysiological in tone... always! They are of themselves, but certainly not in the Frank Stella sense of dynamism. They are more manual than that, less mechanical and raw in emotion. Yet, these paintings at their best venture somewhat into other realms of being beyond the work itself. And for that, I have my father to Thank!

## **The Inner Chapters: Goldenrod**

In the beginning there was total darkness. Nothing, not anybody existed. Until one dark timeless event occurred. And out of the darkness light came, slowly. An infinitesimal source of fiery light bound itself toward the sun, and nothing and not anyone could do anything about it. And thus warmth was born into the ethereal nighttime. And the sun that was not a sun was made anew. And each consecutive star in the galaxy was thus born out from the light. A line of soft light then occurred and the world was constructed upon an ethereal plane. A softened and vivid ethereal plane. And each night when I wake to realize new stars have been born, water is reborn again. For happiness is but a tear in the grisaille design of my mind. Rise now, my children, rise! Thus the word took birth into light and the way. And even now lightning strikes and the church bell booms in a low sound, and then on high! Then pink and blue. And together purple was born out of pride.

## **The Inner Chapters: 2004-Present**

In the west, we have a name for different stages of development in an artistic career. We refer to these stages as maturities. The Inner Chapters, or, the black paintings, was my third major maturity as an artist and most significant. Work on this series began in the early summer of 2004 and was summarized by the end of 2008 into a series of seven 6' x 6' paintings and one 21" x 21" painting. Many preparatory drawings were also made the previous summers. This series of black and grey paintings was created upon my returning home to Brooklyn after having visited Washington D.C.'s National Gallery of Art where I viewed The Stations of the Cross, a black and white series of large-scale paintings created by the Abstract Expressionist artist Barnett Newman between the years of 1958-66.

Having stood in the Newman room at the museum for at least an hour soaking in the intricacies of form and having visited Dia Beacon in upstate New York to see Agnes Martin's paintings, I immediately knew what I was to do when I returned to New York. A shape and a semblance of process came to mind and once I made it back I started working immediately narrowing my focus over the course of three years ending with The Inner Chapters I – VIII.

During this time in New York, I not only saw an aesthetic way through Newman and Martin's paintings, I was also reading their writings on art. I was involved with the literature of Taoism; the Tao Te Ching written by Lao Tzu, and with Chuang Tzu's equally philosophical/religious writings. And I had just purchased at the museum the first-time published book of Mark Rothko's writings on art, titled, The Artist's Reality: Philosophies of Art, as well as having recently purchased Kazimir Malevich's, The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism. Franz Kline's black and whites left a bold impression on me, too.

Just as well, I was deeply involved with a study of Chinese landscape painting at The Metropolitan Museum of art which taught me two things: what is left out, spare, and minimal is just as important as what is present in a painting. And both Asian landscape painting and

philosophy picture man within nature not separate from it. In a late Ming handscroll, the rock leans right and the figures bend right, as flow the moss and trees. Being part of nature man is observed in unison with all things. A few words from the early seventeenth century Chinese landscape painter T'ang Chih-ch'i help to describe the feeling, "Brushwork pertains to the refined, untrammelled style and spirit, which should be harmonious, pure, and agreeable."

I was at the tail end of my graduate studies at Hunter College, City University of New York when I was showing my earliest ventures into this body of work in the fall of '05 (the works on paper) and the spring of '06 to mixed reviews. While in school I was mostly working out my ideas through small scale works on paper and through a handful of larger paintings that formed my thesis exhibition. It wasn't until the summer of '06, post-schooling, that I began the series of eight refined black and grey paintings.

In my reading during that time, I came across passages such as these that resonated deep within me...

"To him [the Kwakiutl artist] a shape was a living thing, a vehicle for an abstract thought complex, a carrier of the awesome feelings he felt before the terror of the unknowable."

—*Barnett Newman*

"When an artist becomes aware of his exact function, that is when he knows, suddenly, exactly what he will do and how he will do it. We say that he has attained to his *vision*."

—*Agnes Martin*

Empty yourself of everything.  
Let the mind become still.  
The ten thousand things rise and fall while the Self watches their return.

They grow and flourish and then return to the source.  
Returning to the source is stillness, which is the way of nature.  
The way of nature is unchanging.  
Knowing constancy is insight.  
Not knowing constancy leads to disaster.  
Knowing constancy, the mind is open.  
With an open mind, you will be openhearted.  
Being openhearted, you will act royally.  
Being royal, you will attain the divine.  
Being divine, you will be at one with the Tao.  
Being at one with the Tao is eternal.  
And though the body dies, the Tao will never pass away.

—*Lao Tzu*

"[...] understanding that rests in what it does not understand is the finest."

–*Chuang Tzu*

“[...] we cannot duplicate the statement of a painting into words. We can only hope to arouse with our words a train of similar associations, but these are subjective to the spectator and in no way duplicate the original statement.”

–*Mark Rothko*

“By “Suprematism” I mean the supremacy of pure feeling in creative art. To the Suprematist the visual phenomena of the objective world are, in themselves, meaningless; the significant thing is feeling.”

–*Kazimir Malevich*

The paintings in this series, in my mind, reflect these sentiments. They came into being after a long sojourn into the mind and heart of working nonobjectively, that is, after looking inward for a time and not to the world of things. Therefore, I feel that the paintings not only reflect these thoughts and states of being, but successfully represent a tradition of belief in painting as a discipline dedicated to such notions of philosophical, spiritual, and formal understanding. I want to be clear in my notes at this time that black is not hate, it is love, and grey is softness and purity.

I am not the first to reduce a painting to a singular shape within the bounds of a square, but I am the first to do it in this manner. And what I realize now, some twenty-one years later, is that I am comfortable saying as much, whereas, had the paintings been shown upon their initial creation, my ego at the time may have undone me. So, in this sense, I’m glad the paintings have aged and renewed themselves with this opportunity for display. And, I have been glad to venture into their technique and mindset once again in order to continue to produce more paintings of this kind in my way.

Having revisited them, it was necessary that the paintings be finished similarly. The black areas were painted by using Flashe, a vinyl-based paint that also dries matte and is soluble in water. Now, years later it is widely heralded by painters of all kinds. Oil has a glossier satin sheen at times. The interior grey shapes were painted using thin layers of acrylic over an absorbent ground medium. And in terms of process and feeling I held onto this studio note written during the creation of the original eight paintings in 2006...

“I am going ahead with a series that, from what I can now tell (three paintings in), only changes with shape from piece to piece. Ground, brushwork, and color (black and grey) are constant. The surface is layered using similar repetitive strokes with the same size and style of brush. Each is made using equal amounts and values of black. Each painting is 6’ x 6’...

What I am seeking is to realize my response to the work when all remains the same outside of the expression of shape. With each piece comes a different feeling, though I have not yet experienced them hanging as a group. I will name the series “The Inner Chapters”.”

The Inner Chapters, the summary title for the works, is named after Chuang Tzu’s writings which consist of seven inner chapters famous for their use of metaphor, parable, and anecdote. But I want to be clear that, to me, the paintings don’t read this way through metaphor, parable, or anecdote. I am of the tradition of Abstract Expressionism. The paintings are a one-to-one encounter to me and are not valued through associations of this kind. In person, they are pure felt experience.

Plus, a single small painting is dedicated to the first Taoist author I ever read, and it is titled, For Lao Tzu. This painting was created later in 2008 and the newest pieces I have been working on in this vein were made this year in 2024.



Inspiration #27: Spatial Acuity (The Wild), 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 48 x 48 inches

## **The Inner World**

It seems to me there is a rather abundant means of expression available to us in this nation. It also occurs to me that there are more so-called “artists” per capita in this world. But really, has this changed? No. It has not. Those who are the artists are the minority. And justifiably so. The rest are painting the world, or something like that. We artists, true artists, are involved in making our inner worlds a reality! In this way, we depict the most real presentational subject matter of all! The inner world of the self as it has been influenced by outer structures. By people. By things. Occurrences. Happiness, and traumatic events occur to us as happenstances. Therefore, we depict them from the inside, out. You look at a picture and you say well, it looks like something, but what is it, of? And I am telling you...

Why must the vanguard also be cosmopolitan strictly! It is not the actual reality of balance in the since of nature and culture! Given the restraints and freedoms of small-town living, rural freedoms, why cannot it be stated that way, with vigor. Alas, the balance is to be found in small towns. Why do I say this? Well, it is because Nature, Big Nature and small-town life go hand in hand. You have the struggle of town life meeting the exiting of it, out into nature! Also, small towns are often situated, like mine is, between large cosmopolitan cities. Because you live in a small town, you are privileged if you want to be. It does not mean, like the city dweller says, that you must paint cows all day. David Hickey said something like that. It is an absurd notion nowadays, that we paint cows all day. Sophistication resides there, and here. But I am asking you all, where does the truth reside fundamentally, is it not in the balance between civilization, isolation, movability, *and* Nature?

## **The Inspirations**

In “The Inspirations,” the initial visualizations come to me as a structured whole, in a squared format on gridded papers, usually. From there forward, it is about finding what I would like to refer to as an entropic harmony within the format. I work them out color-wise in my mind on the gridded papers first, provided the compositions are to my nature!

The lone square structures arrange the compositional settings upon which information is provided on graphs. Color choices for different sections of networking find their complementary mark making once this is done! From that point of inspiration, structure-wise, to the end results, it is a balancing of informational entropies into harmonious compositions of thought! Thoughts about void, size and scale, relationships old and new arise. These paintings provide an inlet, and opportunities for viewers to take what they will from the paintings themselves.

Now, the reason I paint is for discovery and invention, and to provide others with the possibility of revelation. The resolution of these works throughout my process, is about the experience of visual balance. Balance is a mystery, as we ourselves have a difficult time sustaining balance in day to day life. The cues are there for ourselves while working but are constantly shifting and sliding around. Balance to myself, is composed of the psychological and the physical.



Intellectual, emotional, and sensory experiences combine to create the balance I am looking for in paintings. No matter if I am working on a landscape, or nonobjectively; to bring the world around me into fruition and into balance, is one of my goals. Harmony is for naught if not for chaos. The world is not always in chaos, this is true; therefore, beauty is my project most of the time. To myself, the polarities of beauty lie in the crude and raw, and in the seductive and lyrical. My paintings are in between these two poles!

We experience beauty on our own terms, mainly, when looking at artwork. Therefore, my work is not topical. I avoid surface ideas or current issues in my paintings because I feel that it could disturb the read of the paintings in the viewer. We are told what to think depending on the channel of news we are on. I hope my channel is more open.

One may ask how a fundamental view of reality may be derived from nonrepresentational artwork? My answer to this is through balance. I'm just trying to get the right balance in the work. You see all of these lines and shapes that at first mean nothing to you, but if you take the time to compare one piece to the next you will find that some nonrepresentational artworks please you more than others. Tension and harmony are both at play! I believe the pleasurable part has to do with the balancing of formal elements into a cohesive design. Transmutation of reality into materiality, investing thought and emotion into the colors and marks is my process. The compositions serendipitously line up with the balance of certain individual's constitutions in that precious moment of viewing.

I suppose you could say I am a symbolist, and a colorist. But it is important to keep it in mind that I don't always know what symbols I am applying and often their meanings, individually or in unity. It is significant to realize subconscious levels of thought are at play, meaning I work intuitively at the same time as conscious thoughts do arise. Usually, it is a give and take, so to speak, of conscious and subconscious states of mind, the more automatic states of thinking and feeling versus the planned connection to other marks, gestures, and symbols laid down.

As Jack Whitten said before he died, photography has been the single most influential medium on painting since its development. Once I was hired at the University of Central Missouri it occurred to me their more traditional advocacy of drawing from observation. What I took from this experience was less dependency on the photograph as a means to get the image I was after. Now I paint without it both nonobjectively from my imagination and representationally from direct observation of nature. What occurs to myself, at the moment, is the utter relevance of my abstractions, this work I refer to as "The Inspirations." The paintings do not rely on photography or any post photographic technological advancement outside of the painting to be a painting. This may be their most significant relationship to our world. Their content is manifested from within. And their look likewise is real. They are not flattened by the computer generated or photographic image, or by myself, due to the images being conveyed or constructed. They are, in most cases, imageless, and real. Their autonomy is progressive if we consider painting post developments in technology. They are a return to the reparation of self. And their relationship is to the world a warm one; direct and poignant in their meaning! And their meaning as such is connected to their hand-made quality of being, their essence from within, their touch, their tenor, and their feeling of freedom from within, in this world. The (ahhh!) of nature is within them, as well!

## **The Liberty Center Gala**

Some will say last night's Gala was a success. And, they would be wrong from my standpoint. The market values of the silent auction were not marked! I would say 99% of all sales were below market prices. I have worked hard to set my prices where they are and they were not met by many spectators to the Gala. I included two modestly priced at a value of 650 dollars and 1000 dollars. But I'm sure you all had a good time. A long way to go! That's it for me.

### **A Matter of the Hearts**

The artist's duty is not to paint what the world wants to see from him, but what matters to himself. And what matters to himself should matter to the world.

### **On the Hobbyist Painters**

The hobbyist paints not what matters to himself, but what the world sees through blind eyes. Their work is not toward enlightenment and is damaging to others!

### **On Wars**

Wars are fought because people are not themselves, not working on themselves also. You can't go buy your self-worth. But you can surround yourself with objects imbued by such individuals of worth.

### **On Becoming**

When I was getting my start as an artist on this Earth, my parents made it clear to me that it was a choice, and a commitment for the long haul and term. No turning back, so to speak. And now I look at this world and see a lot of people unlike myself. Many jacks of trades and masters of none, uncommitted to self-worth. And boy does that piss me off! Where were their parents at? Why has it become so dire? Our circumstances desire specialists and it's not coming from the mentally malnourished. So think about your circumstances for once in your lives. Desire more for yourselves. Travel when you need to. Cultivate an open mind. Desire worldliness. But start at home. Fix you before all else. And be strong!

## **The Lucky Ones**

I work out of desire. An endless need to create objects and poems that enliven my spirit with newness! I forgo the monotony of evolutionary tactics of artmaking, intentionally neglecting subtle nuances of perfection for the larger picture. I want to look back on a life lived, not a brand. I need freedom in my life. Therefore, I do these things toward a mindset carefree of traditional standards of development! I don't get too big or too small, I walk a line with offshoots as a "medium" in this world. Yet, I do have rules. The news is not the channel I am on, it is a passing

and informative place, to me. If I am inspired by it, it is my parents' doing. Our studio, mine and my dad's, is a friendly place to be in. Disturbances are not mine to hold.

The spirit guides me! More or less, in temperament. An even keel suits me better than the negativity found in the news and joy surrounds after visitors have behaved within our studio. I don't like critiques of my work unless it comes from within. And then, it should be said, not told. Otherwise, one is knocked around a bit, losing his temperament, and is distracted from more important things such as friendliness, a positive outlook, and gentle attitudes. Which is the place I strive to be in and to create for myself and others. My artwork alone should help to do this within people. But it is a complicated world with different contextual feelings, questions, thoughts, and answers. Therefore, the whole ordeal remains open and subjective... unless luck, is on your side!

### **The Manifold Tendency**

In my art and in that of some others there is this tendency toward multiplicity, pluralism, variety. Variety is a means by which I negotiate working methodologies. It is a free flow of variety. A multiplicity of languages that in the end are my own. The work comes first. I drive it and it, at times, drives me. I listen to the work. I negotiate with it. I feel that it is a line on which many offshoots exist. A material/immaterial line of thinking and feeling on which exists many nuances.

A clear mind. A willfully clear response to life is the work which is at times seemingly convoluted.

### **The Master and Student #1**

The Master spoke, "You there, with arrogance, unwilling to learn but from your own way, what I ask, is your way?"

The student replied, "My way is not your way."

The Master responded, "You are dismissed."

The Master's assistant asked, "Master, why was the student dismissed?"

The Master responded, "There is but only one way, my assistant. Should you question this, you have strayed. Have you strayed, my assistant?"

The assistant responded, "Yes master, I have strayed."

The Master responded, "My dear assistant, why have you strayed?"

The Master's assistant responded, "Because, Master, the student you dismissed distracted me."

At this time the Master hung his head low and stated, "Dear assistant, you are aware, but you strayed."

The Master then stated to his assistant, "There is no distraction. There is no devil in you. There is but one way. No demons to distract you now. Be on your way."

The assistant was frightened, and the Master knew this to be true. The Master comforted his assistant by saying, "Be on your way and into the light you will be protected and into the darkness you will light the way."

The assistant was ready then.

The Master dismissed his assistant.

The Master's morning verse to his assistant thus went like this...

"You child, there in your way, what of the struggle?  
You see child, the struggle and the joy are the same.  
Watch in your mind as one becomes the next.  
On and on the way unfolds. The clear path exists.  
The troubled path does not. You see child.  
If you overcome the troubles it is only moving forward.  
Moving forward and troubles and joy are the same.  
The struggle is not real because the struggle is an illusion.  
There is only the way. And the way is all encompassing."

## **The Mean in Art**

*"A fundamental principle which defines art is "measure," by which Plato means the determination of appropriate relationships through knowledge of proportion and of the mean."*

I find this very interesting, interesting indeed! To denote the mean, the average measurement of things, of life, is also to understand the highest highs and lowest lows, or, length and width respectively! In color, you might be served well to not think in terms of black and white only, but of gray. For, what of colors, but of the vast array of lifeful varieties found in and outside of the mean of humanity, of greys! Light, the highest, the Universe of God that is, white. Nature, the lowest, the chaos of Lucifer, the earth tones that is, including black.

Scientifically speaking about color, though, you might want to keep your mind on the colors, at this, time.

## **The Meta (written from within Denver Springs psych ward)**

How do you speak of the metaphysical with reason? Either this sentence is metaphysical or it is not, this is reason... no? Or, it is an irrational statement, which it is not, but could be? And there, that last part, [...and could be?] gets at it! Either way, the meta can fairly be said not to contain but to demonstrate and show the beyond and perhaps the divine! Or, you see, one goes on and on, writing and writing without explaining anything. And this is life. But, not really.

## **The Metaphysical Realities of Thought**

The metaphysical reality of things is the last frontier of reason, we lose this, and all is lost. It is the interstice between what is real and what isn't! The artist operates in here, doing his thing. It is the space between Heaven and here on earth. The ether, some might call it!

## **The Misunderstanding of Nonobjectivity**

"It always occurred to me, the highest honor was a museum show. I don't make house paintings, I make Museum Paintings. My dream is of meaning. Not monetary."

—Damon Freed

"The struggle is beyond painting, not with painting."

—Mark Rothko

"No one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the American public."

—Doug Freed via H.L. Mencken

One of the greatest misunderstandings of nonobjective artwork in our times is that abstraction, or rather, nonobjectivity has been of mere formal invention and advancement. This happens, of course, invention and progress occur, but what I want you to understand is that the artworks have meaning beyond appearance. The artwork provides an emotional experience. In our age, there truly may be some who create art about art, or paintings about paint, but, this work is of material concern above all. To say that abstraction or nonobjectivity has been about this and only this is to greatly misunderstand its origins and paths in our world. I would like you to think of my work in the tradition of Kandinsky on the spiritual in art, or Malevich on the metaphysical possibilities of art. Or on Hilma af Klint, of the mystical. Or about Newman and Rothko and the sublime. Clifford Still and originality. Or about Agnes Martin and her understanding of beauty – that it is

not in the eye, but in the mind. Or about Brice Marden and his understanding of light and nature. Doug Freed and process.

These artists, all nonobjective painters, spread throughout years and times, have painted not formally, but thoughtfully about life. Therefore, you've missed the mark to think about them otherwise. You've missed the meaning. One must slow down enough to grasp such work. It's understandable in today's world to have such misconceptions about artists such as these, but, I urge you to take the time to understand, and before all, to experience their work. You will discover the truth should you give up on the views of the scene, they're simply consumed by surface thinking, the scenesters are. They all are just keeping up with the trends. Keeping up with the Joneses. To be an artist, one obeys his or her own mind. That's the way to create your meaning. Others will appreciate it.

Above all, I am interested in the emotional impact paintings can have. Actually, this is why I work as I do, constantly. My emotional life informs the work, thereby it provides the viewer with similar attributes. The initial impact a painting can have is this! Some pull you in. Others push you out, and some do both at the same time! A painting stays the same, but we change and I come back to this time after time. Here, in this simple yet profound statement about the work I conceived upon graduating from Hunter College, City University of New York, I try to convey the meaning.

Balance, March 2006

My most effortless paintings  
Capture a bit of balance. I  
Cannot explain the exact  
Arrangements that cause  
This experience, only that the  
Feeling is elusive and not to be  
Described but witnessed.  
Neither symmetry nor any  
Formal analyses or prescription  
Contains it, for the clues  
Are constantly shifting  
Within the mind and senses  
While making and viewing.  
Balance is not an aesthetic  
Concern or act. It is not a  
Mathematics or science of  
Composition and color. Nor is  
It a philosophic or  
Paradigmatic exercise of logic  
And reasoned thought.  
It is a momentary state of



Mind and being that successful  
Artworks barely hint toward.  
We stand before these  
Works in awe and are  
Pleased by an absolute  
Contradiction between the  
Paintings and our incapacity to  
Sustain balanced life moments.

## **The New York School**

Plain and Simple, Rothko is loved for light, Pollock is loved for movement. Newman, for abstraction in intellectual terms. These three seem to me to encompass the heights of form during the 50's.

I for one, will be known for color, and shape. Shape as a primal activity of form. As a direct correspondence with survival aesthetics, with movement. Color as it speaks to ourselves, through light, as a spiritual encounter. And for abstraction.

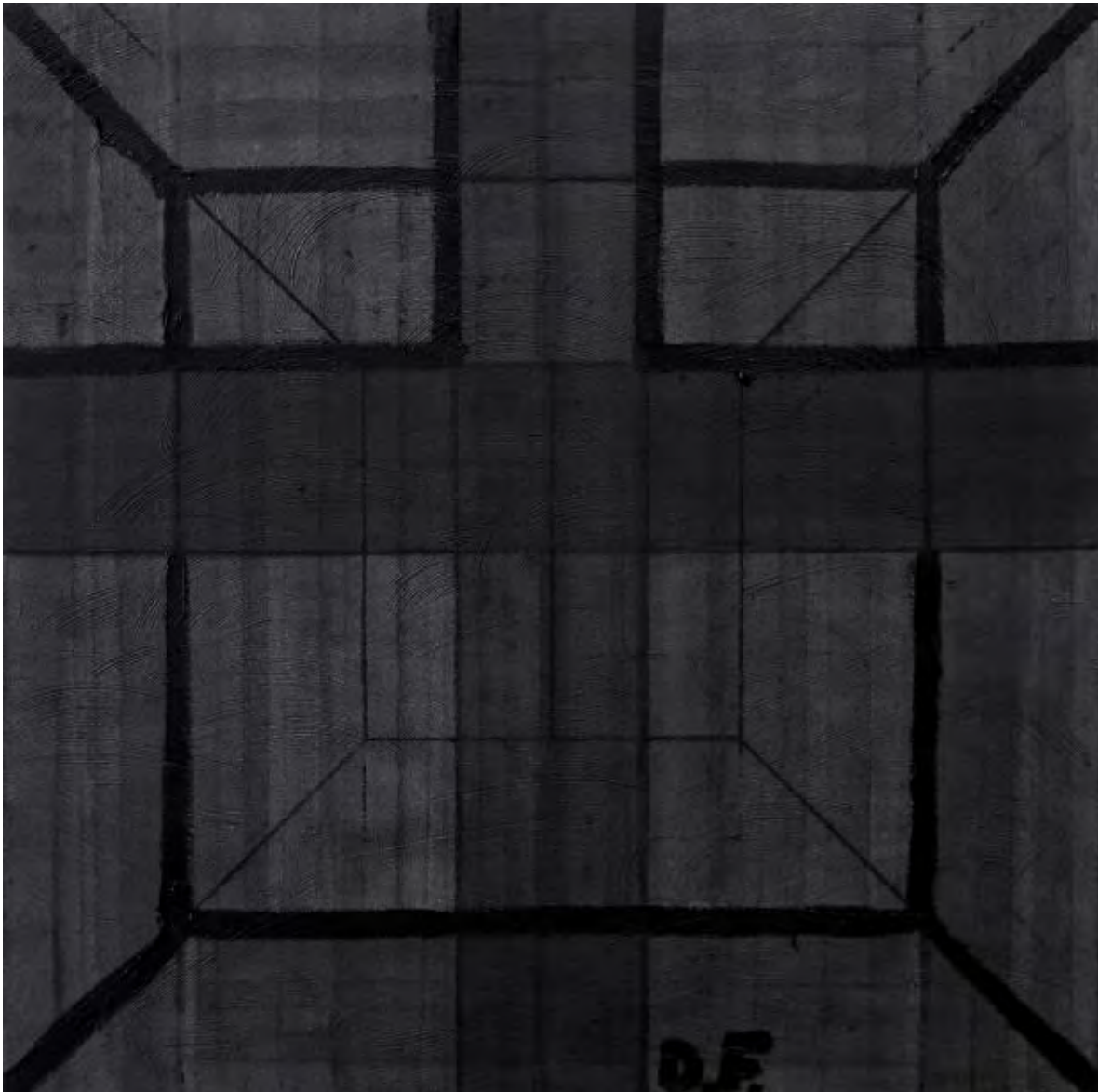
## **The Obstacle and Void do not Interchange**

In my dad's most recent painting I can see in the landscape the possibilities of Obstacle and Void space. You are not led into the painting by any perspectival means, the trees are on the surface, the light emanating from behind them. You go in, and the trees remain static. It is a magnificent painting of nature. And yes, it is a landscape, but I mean Of Nature. As in, we ARE nature. As in, we're nature and it is us – together.

## **The Path of Perfection**

I do not prefer the use of known imagery in artwork. Your path and your expression should be defined by you alone. Nor do I prefer the manipulation of known imagery in artwork. The path of artwork should lead away from what is known, away from the past and toward a better and more aware present. It is very hard at first to give up what is known. Many words have been spoken and written on the subject, but it remains true. How many possible outcomes are there for the expression of artworks – as many expressions as there are individuals. This is not another treatise on nonobjective artwork. Nor is this a call to artists to change what they are doing, unless you are naturally dissatisfied. Then, of course, change is inevitable. But do not change in jest or in helplessness. You must first wait for clarity on the matter. Alone, then, in your studio or on your porch, it will come to you to make a change. That change will surely be one that is more effective and more aware. I uphold the artist who seeks and is naturally dissatisfied. This means

that he or she will have many discoveries and moments of contentment. Surely you will move away from the satisfaction of other's discoveries and provide the world with something new. In doing so you are rewarded and others will recognize you in the work. The work will be unique and positive. It will be unique because there are no two people the same and it will be positive because once others see you in the work it means you are on the right path. Your supporters will be filled with joy when viewing the paintings and excited about your progression. Through your offering they will recognize their own truth, the truth that they too are independent and original with or without being an artist. I am speaking of the artist's pursuit, but the path of perfection applies to all people in all fields.



Inspiration #28: 14<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb, 2019, Acrylic and Sand on Canvas, 48 x 48 inches

## **The Portraits**

Each face is a gesture. Self-contained within circles, exceeding the sides only at the bottoms. Colors are situated side by side and not touching, mostly! Sometimes I use symmetry to balance the pieces but at other times they often are asymmetrical at best, providing the viewer with perfection in the way I see it. Sometimes a slowing down is a necessary tool to use and at other times a speedy gesture is needed to enhance the gestures. I use two brushes, mainly. Both flat brushes. One is a half-inch brush for thicker gestures and the other is smaller as a tool for thinner applications. Each painting begins free formed of mind, meaning I use intuitive measure. This way I don't have to use any rulers! Totally hand done! Free formed.

## **The Process, 2005-2022**

I usually approach my paintings intuitively with some aspects of the work inevitably communicated ambiguously leading to miscommunication and misinterpretation. Yet, I can be adept with words when speaking in brief sessions like lectures and critiques. Even still, I may be more articulate when I write. So please consider these words in 'addition' to artist talks and critiques. In this short writing, I address formal issues and touch on meaning that I find within the work, but it is only meaning to me, and I don't expect it to arise within the viewer's mind exactly. I want to keep my statements personal and avoid writing that ventures beyond what it is I feel inside myself and within my own work. I believe a painting can give to the viewer by way of precise meaning and formal exactness, we are all experiencing the same content. Viewers bring to a painting what is inside of his and her own mind as well, and interpretation almost always varies due to this type of interference from them. This may seem like stating the obvious to some, but I think it is often forgotten when dealing with words that attempt to get at a painting, or at a certain 'kind' of painting, in a factual way.

An abstract feeling arises in my mind and affects my senses. Within calmness the feeling is clear, and I intuitively understand what to paint. Rarely do I see the painting in my mind's eye before beginning this way. The feeling directs me until the painting and feeling are succinct. This is how I know when to finish. I want to make it clear that my work is not about a "look" and that I am not a materialist but that I do find the materiality of a painting equally important as the release from materiality into a metaphysical state of mind. Nothing in my paintings is factual, except for the material and the feelings. In starting, I know the first point of the first side of the first shape. From that point on the painting is made without thinking, responding only to how I feel and to what I see in front of me—occurring from that which I feel.

Shape, shape is important to me. It changes with each piece but the form remains the same. The intuitive drawing of a shape directly onto the surface creates the composition and both shape and composition occur at the same time with little planned and the shapes are not placed with predetermination. In writing "little is planned" I am referencing my personal functioning of thought and with each painting all is again questioned, even the size. The shapes are unlike any that exist in the world and they are weightless. This is not to say that the shapes are absolutely

unrelated to the history of nonrepresentational painting but that the shapes are different from the physical world of things and objects in very specific ways. At a glance, one sees shape and thinks three-dimensionally (the illusion of three dimensions), but really the paintings are the dissolution of form, dimensionless and freed from obligation and from gravity, as we know it. Some shapes merge with the background giving life to a seemingly unified surface and incorporeal place. In the making, if my mind is unobligated and undistracted, the shapes are light; heavy thoughts equal heavy shapes, and so on. For a shape to be light and balanced there must be a slight hint of the opposite; therefore, the arrangement is a complicated intuitive application that can involve long periods of observation and adjustment to the under-drawing of the shape. Other times I concern myself less with balance and more with the immediacy of applying the shape to the surface, depending on my mood. Heavy pictures are unsuccessful pictures. (There is no such thing as failed paintings, we learn from the bad ones too.) Gravity is an idea that has little to do with my mind and the way I feel, more to do with shackles.

Weightlessness is real, a physical sensation and state of mind guided by inspirations. When I look up to the stars I feel detached, impersonal, irrelevant, and concurrently I shape a bond with all beings and things, a feeling of significance. I just feel and I float. Lightness is an undefined grey area where opposites come together and is specific in this way. This is a feeling that I aspire to in my work but in no way is the work about nature or the landscape or “about” anything at all. Perhaps, it is about Nature with a capital N. Or, if you like, Life with a capital L?

The work is only factual from a standpoint of materials and feeling. Perfection does not exist materially; therefore, the feeling captured within the paintings could never exceed being an approximation. To me, the origin of the world and myself is undefined and exists without a precise beginning, so I could not possibly go on making work that defines itself. Intentions are all that I have and I can only hope to even hint at them within the work. Belief is painting and it is belief in the defined tangible and intangible, materiality evoking emotion.

To me, right and wrong does not exist in the world, only the individual nature of beings and things. One cannot exceed its own nature. All try and all fail. Some give up trying. I believe this to be the nature of personal success. Knowing oneself. I am still seeking answers and if they are to come they come but I am interested in the questions mostly. As a painter there is only one question from which all questions arise, “What is painting to me?” My questions are my paintings and I have not yet found factual answers. Answers are complete, they are fixed, and my work is not completed. Only after intense observation of the paintings themselves do I grasp anything remotely specific, at best elusive, and not even then do I fully understand even the exact meaning of them. They are a mystery to me!

Lightness occurs in three distinct ways between the relationships of shape to the nonrepresentational atmospheres inside the work. (Painted atmospheres not in direct reference to nature or the landscape.) The first distinct way is when a shape appears to float or to be light within the atmosphere yet is clearly contrasted apart from the atmosphere. The second way is when a shape merges with the atmosphere creating an overall place wherein the shape is inseparable from it. And the third way is when the shape borders the atmosphere itself and contains it. The first way presents a weightless shape suspended in levitation and the second way presents a unified state of being light, atmosphere and shape combined. By light and lightness, I

am not referring to the state of being light in relation to gravity or to luminosity and darkness, but to the feeling of weightlessness in the mind and metaphysical sensations. An intangible process of gravity. Nor am I referring to lightness as an intellectual concept and idea but as it is felt in the mind and body inspiring an ideal rooted in experience. Utter balance!

I will try to give an example of how the shapes do not exist as three-dimensional, or of the world. Walking down the street we see a dimensionless silhouette of a body or object but our mind tells us this is not so and completes the shape in three-dimensions, imagining someone to be present. In the paintings, a successful shape never appears as an illusion or silhouette of an object with three-dimensions; it exists only as an irregular shape on the canvas and within the mind's eye. You move into the shapes just as the shapes hold you out, canceling the specific illusion of physical dimensions. The same can be said for the area surrounding the shapes. For one to experience the sensation of moving into the shapes one must also sense the shapes as obstacles around the edges of the shapes. The mental realization and physical sensation of moving inward cannot occur without the opposite effect, it would seem to me?! Neither moving into the shapes or being held out of the shapes is fully realized by the viewer if we don't consider both sensations. The interchange between these two stable conditions springboards our minds into a realm of experience wherein transcendence is possible. And, once the two ways of looking at the paintings fuse – transcendence occurs!

The shapes assert themselves as impenetrable obstacles once separated from their atmospheres and penetrable obstacles once homogenized with their backgrounds. I would like to refer to the space created by the shapes as Obsticular Space. It is not simply obstructed space because the shapes are also permeable allowing the viewer to seemingly move into, through and around the shapes once homogenized. To fully understand and appreciate the experience and necessity of expanding freely over a plane I had to experience distracted daily life within the obstructed streets of New York and likewise the clarity of harmony with Kansas and Missouri views. Within my paintings I do not attempt to represent natural spatial differences using fixed or defined spatial relationships, but I do present the abstracted physical sensation and feeling one experiences when confronted within an open place and in front of an obstacle.

If a painting quickly and boldly implies a familiar shape or representational figure of any sort, I will attempt to eliminate its associative qualities, at times. To me, this signals tangential intellectual or personified thoughts during the making. Yet, my titles are clues, at times, to what I imagine them to be! The paintings must be agreeable to my mind. Other viewers may recognize parts of a painting that allude to different real objects or things, and this is unavoidable, it is within their minds. I believe that all beings and things are subject to illusionistic representation and metaphorical interpretation regardless of how a thing presents itself; it is in the mind and the eye. Not within absolutely one or the other. Personification of the shapes is likely inevitable, but is secondary, and is a reference to a sequential way of thinking about the paintings. This often occurs only after the painting is initially felt within communication.

The actuality of the paintings themselves, not just the shapes, is neither object nor window; rather, they interact as both. Within duration of concentrated viewing one recognizes the overall flatly painted surfaces and moves into those surfaces. One moves between the physical realities of a painted two-dimensional surface-actuality in the eyes, into the mental realm of

immateriality-actuality in the mind. Of course, I am referring to the successful works here—many have fallen short.

Line is occasionally present in my work but it is never foremost. Seldom do I think about line once the painting is done. It is only used to pronounce shape in process at times. Filling a shape solid is one way and filling it with lines is another, and outlining the shapes is yet another way.

Gesture is apparent in some of my brushwork and it is anonymous, repetitive gesture, free-flowing, an all-over application and effect of similar marks. I don't care for the drama of isolated expressive gestures for doubt of an overly explicit mood or exaggerated meaning. I prefer subtleties. Formal elements within the paintings frequently complement each other creating a specific nonobjective experience, in turn, precise communication is freeing the viewer to bring their own subjective intellectual and feeling based responses to them.

My palette is reduced to black, white and grey at this time. Color, and all things seeable and unseeable, tangible and intangible, audible and inaudible, fragrant and odorless can be expressed with black, white and grey, I believe. This is true without using highly chromatic blacks, whites and greys as well. It is within the mind's eyes. This is not to say color is without value to me, just that it is not needed, for now, so I work achromatically.

Between painting and belief, I find no gap. Compassion for people and all things seen and unseen may be the most important human quality. For me, it is the commitment to one's own ideal shared indirectly through action. I would like the paintings to express my deepest compassion. Every piece is an inconclusive result of my experience of living and painting, one not separate from the other. The work is born out of being and exists how it exists, without me. Declaratively, I want the paintings to exist void of acting and free from hiding for all viewers to project their own true feelings and perceptions of self onto them. Honesty is key. For the paintings to propose something and to *tell* nothing, not even with a whisper, is my sincerest hope. May they communicate accurately!

### **The Saint, the Leader, the Rejector, the Follower, the Skeptic, and the Slave**

There is always a saint, there is usually a leader, and a rejector, a follower, a skeptic, and a slave. In this we have our world and make of it what you will but books like the bible were written out of it. Some say to provide the light, some to guide with the light, others to reject it, some to simply follow along, some to question it, and others are enslaved by it! Who are you?

### **The Self-Portraits I**

I went back into these this morning. It's kind of like a friend of mine said once about his poetry, I get in and I get out quickly. You kind of don't need to be overwhelmed by the emotional states of

being when doing it this way. Yet, you need to be honest, while submerged. So what I do is to purge myself while in the states of being!

## **The Self-Portraits II**

My entire life I've worked with abstraction in one form or another, either with nonobjectivity or referential forms, including landscapes. But not with myself as an image to be dealt with!

In the beginning of isolation things slowed down for me, I was really able to focus on one thing or another, abstraction-wise! And to this end, I created self-oriented works of abstraction at a time of despair. Mentally, they are grounding. At this time... I need an image. Something more directly literal. Yet, emotional and stable simultaneously. The self-portrait, at this point in time to me sounds selfish on the surface but it's not, what better times then now to assert yourselves as, original in formation, and in feelings! As we begin to topple this pandemic we are in by way of ridding it from our world with scientific means, what a better time than now to do this! To show the world our faces, once again!

## **The Shapes**

So, sometimes when looking for shapes I transform them into my likings and once I do, I like them. So, in doing so, you reach a pinnacle of thought, to myself, I do. So I call these states of mind joyed, happy, and upon completion of the shapes, I'm in ecstasy! But, there is a state of mind of joyous exhaustion called being overjoyed! So, at that time I relax and am fulfilled.

## **The Spiritual in Art**

First, what I know, is that the spirit has nothing to do with religion. It is not confounded by it, not encased within it, nor does it belong to art. It has been long associated with these things, but, one can look at it this way. It travels in and out of things, and, at times – it wanes. Living the spiritual life is a hard way to live. It belongs to life, the spirit does, but also to the soul. To all things alive, and to some objects imbued with its life. We call its process sublimation, and perhaps, even transmutation of materials. Lovingly, we communicate with it. Caringly, we also, communicate with it. As a people, we have a way of harnessing it. We, as humans know what it is. But it is hard to locate if unaware. It is not unattached the way you might think of it as a separate entity from ourselves, at least not most of the time. It permeates our materials when we are invested and positive, most of the time. I would like to say that it is dark at times, as well. Or it can be. Depending on the persons. It travels, to my knowledge, most aptly through nature's materials. The nighttime is frightening at times. Its presence we recognize, it frightens us. We know it holds a power to keep us safe, but we must listen and recognize it. There are some people whom it frightens more than others, but as artists we are taught to harness its presence.



At other times let it go.

Just create.

Do not fear what you don't understand,  
and it may guide you.

Positive and negative go hand in hand.

It is the essence of objects made by hand. It is the vessel  
by which we experience and understand. Our mediums are referred to as such.  
They are called mediums for this reason. In one ear and out the other at times, or at least that's  
what I know. Hocus pocus is what many have referred to it as! Or, you know, like hippy shit!

You must understand its potential to regulate it. At times it guides us. And at other times it  
guides others. This is what I mean, it comes, and it goes within ourselves as it exits our being's  
creations. It travels like I said. In and out of things and people, we are born with it, and at times –  
others are as well...

From the beginning of time it must have been with us people and with gods. We know this to be  
true, but it is such a difficulty knowing this at times. People speak of it. They know it to be true.  
But we must try to see it without looking. In the mind's eye as they say. As they say. So, behave  
and inspiration will be with you. I think this is a good way to put, it. Have the power to speak of  
it... and it will bless you!

Thank you!

## **The Time is Now**

They say desperate times call for desperate measures, but I say it calls for Honorable Measures.  
At times like these, I don't reach for the gin and tonic and do some winning like the old dayz, I  
pull it up by the bootstraps and do some winning. You see, I've worked a lifetime or more at this  
thing here, only to be knocked down, again and again, by a ring of power – so by the forces  
within you, I say abandon your good measure and ride it out as far as you can. And those with  
precise measure, I honor you on this day, and am with you. For, the day has come that we must  
go without force of hand and pray on our instincts to do the work of 40 men. So, call who you  
need to call, *go without*, do your thing, for my time has come, yet again. And when I wake bright  
eyed and bushy tailed in the mornings within this sickness to do some work, let it be my friends,  
let me do the work. Let me be well fed and busy by it. And I will love it. Because, through it –  
you shall see my friends, what it is that you need to do. I have dwelled long enough; the time is  
now!

## **The Top 40**

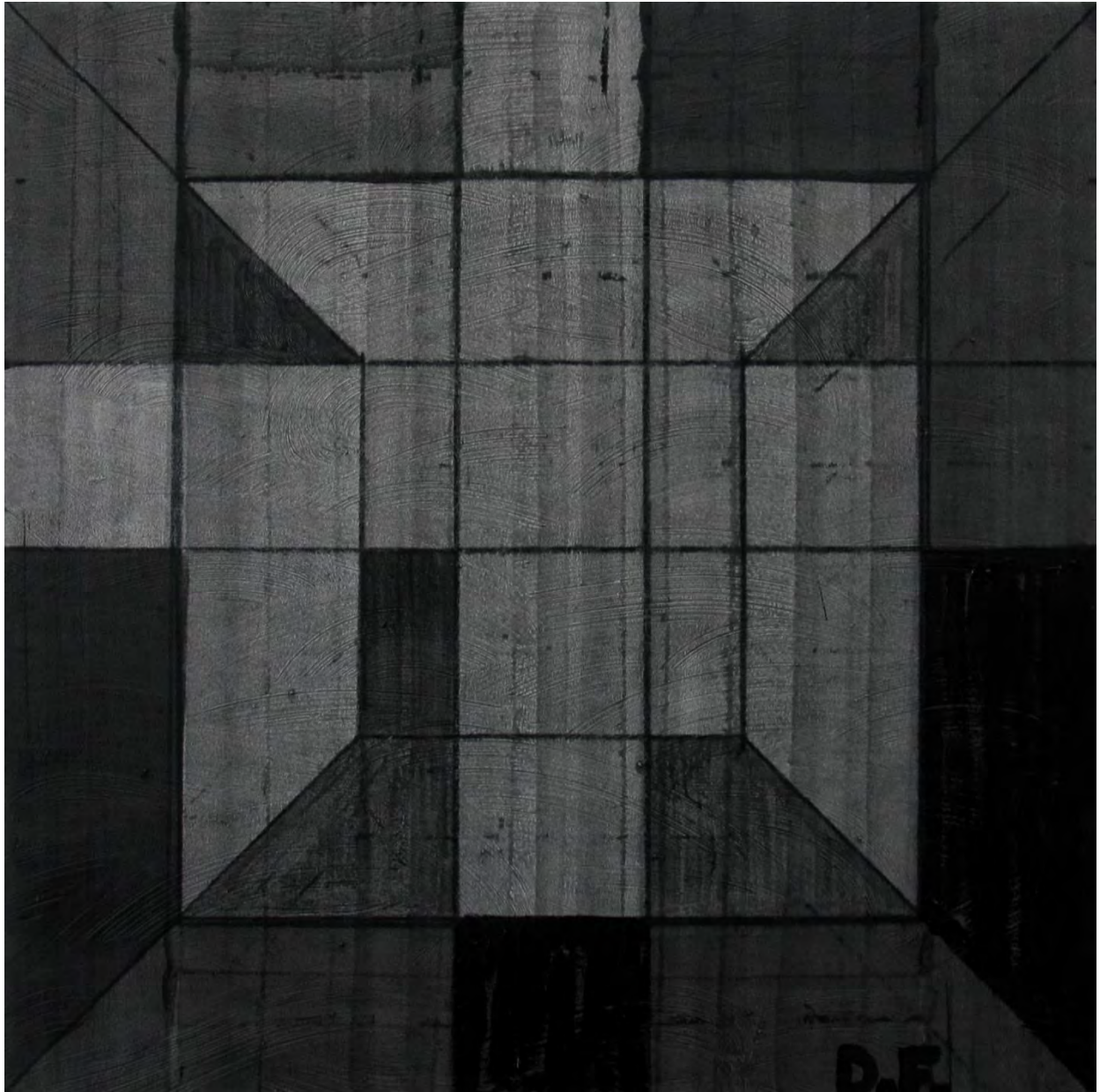
There are times in history, take for example the Renaissance, when the greatest visual artists were the popular ones and the most known to society. At times the avant garde has reigned at the top. Popular culture was then in line with the great art of their times it would seem. Now, it seems different. The great visual art is below the threshold of the popular commodities. I have a friend who compares them, the Renaissance artists to the greatest artists in history and believes that they were praised like top forty musicians are today, at the time. But, look at the top forty songs of today, are they producing the best artistic music, the most progressive music, or are they simply the most accessible! It seems to me to be the later. Therefore, for the most part, I tend to agree with him. It's upsetting to those who realize the real music is not being pushed by the patrons at the top. But my bet is most don't even recognize this to be true. And, I must say that in some ways it's better this way. The artists have their freedoms this way. They might struggle more financially, the better of the bunches, but they don't have to listen to patrons. The greatest fine art seems to have separated, to a large extent, from the packs at the top for sincerity to be clear, and for freedom of expression! But, some of us, the very best of us, are getting through the cracks in culture in due time.

## **The Trinity of Souls and Society**

Silence, when the world is at its loudest is the recognition I've earned.  
And we earn this together. Bolstered by it. By happiness.

## **The Weight of Religion – April 16, 2018**

Years ago I asked my mother, why do you think Rothko committed suicide? She was alarmed by it, and it eventually led me to being institutionalized, unfortunately. Well, I finally have my answer thanks to her confirmation of my well earned knowledge and of her care, and thanks to my father's love for myself. Perhaps it was overly worrisome to her, I don't know, I wasn't depressed at the time I asked the question, just curious was all. But I caught her off guard. This morning it dawned on me why he shot himself. His work became oppressively religious in my opinion due to the weight of religion upon himself due to the world. He became depressed due to it.



Inspiration #29: 4<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Meets His Mother, 2019, Acrylic and Sand on Canvas, 48 x 48 inches

### **The Will of a Man**

There seem to be three operations at work. The sheer will of a man, to complete his task. The degradation of the will of the people. And, yet a third becomes visible once man becomes so exhausted mentally and physically that he can no longer perform. And it is in this moment of exaltation, better yet, it is in his realization of giving into his own exhaustible Nature, that his attitude shifts. And between, then, the stages of Pride and Humility, discovery at last, visits him!

In his final moment of solace, this man breaks through to the other side that at once was invisible, intangible, and scarce. In the yielding of strife, he is then rewarded completely, utterly, and without love... with Love, of another kind. With God's gratitude for the completion of its task. The human being... succeeded. And then, he may move forward into new and complex forms of identity, crisis, and law. For it is the building of these vary laws that is his task when she cannot go on in the middle of tragedy, he is freed. Nature that is. When 'she' cannot, Mary; that is, go on. Love takes them both by hands of worth, as it were, and she says, yes!

## Thoughts

- \* Painting is a factual exploration of truth, each painting a proof and irrefutable fact.*
- \* A humble man's gold is garbage.*
- \* Because a man sleeps does not mean he's rested.*
- \* A man loses his shirt long before his style.*
- \* Endurance is the highest state of mind and most difficult to sustain.*
- \* A single drop of morning light and a man courts hope for seventy nights!*
- \* Almost is the perpetual condition of artistic process.*
- \* There are many types of deaths, none of which are permanent.*
- \* Wars are caused by not sharing Knowledge.*
- \* The senses precede knowledge and therefore thinking. (written from within Denver Springs psych ward)*
- \* To see we must envision, not look.*
- \*Vanity and exhaustion are why the Spirit wanes!*
- \*Nature is Nature. Woman is woman, but there is only a slight deviation at times. Man orders the Universe to his liking. That is to say, with help from Nature, and woman! Should a man marry, he best wait until she is one, with Nature! And by Universe, there is a slight deviation from Man to it, at times. Now, I wait.*

## Thoughts and Chanting: Reflections

In the mornings when all is bright and in the evenings when the sun is setting I have listened to myself, reflected by the chanting of music. I sometimes draw during this time with ink and a sumi brush. My conscious decisions are made apparent as is my subconscious thought that surfaces during the chants. I listen. Decisions are made based on the negativity and positivity I feel in the tone of my words that are reflected by the chanting. I do not speak. I am not outwardly vocal during the chanting. My vocalizations are silent and inward, yet heard by me as reflected back to me by the chanting. The music responds to my thought as it were and I to my thought. Subconscious thoughts arise out of thin air from myself and are reflected back to myself. Realizations and thoughts I have in response to the artwork in front of me or on the table that I am working on are a part of the continuum of thoughts that occur due to the music's tone and my tone in response. With the Buddhist chants I find my thoughts most apparent and most clear coming back to me. Of all the music and chanting I listen to, I find the Buddhist chanting to be the most effective and reflective in the creation of artwork. I can tell when I'm positive and when I'm negative as my emotions rise and fall. Only the positive decisions count.

## Thoughts on Worringer

*"The value of a work of art, what we call its beauty, lies, generally speaking, in its power to bestow happiness."*

—Wilhelm Worringer, from *Abstraction and Empathy*, 1908

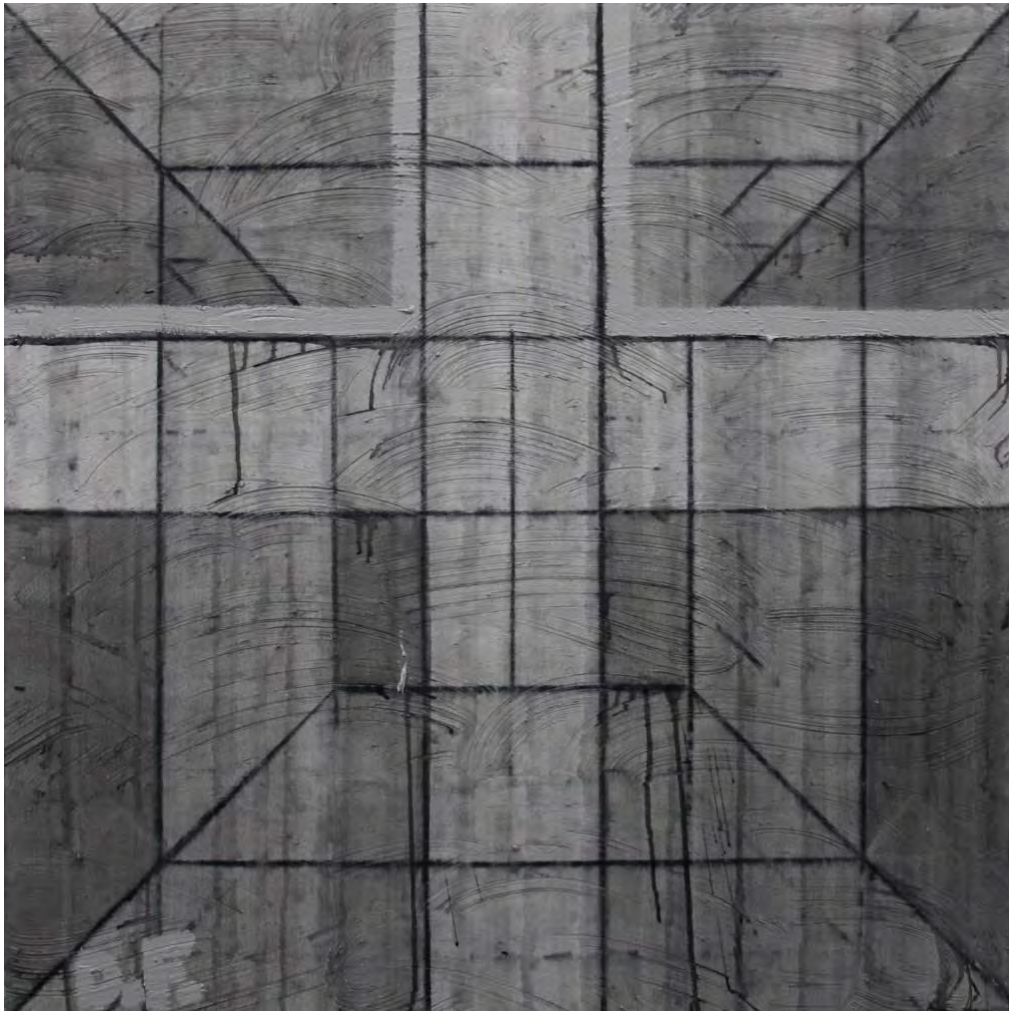
This strikes me as true. The work of art, initially, might bring another kind of emotion, but, in the end, happiness is received. At least a clearer idea of what happiness is to you stems from an experience. A clear picture of your likes and dislikes, of satisfaction. And, this, is why we do what we do. To bring clarity, excitement, and joy, and happiness to the people of the world.

*"No psychology of the need for art-in the terms of our modern standpoint: of the need for style-has yet been written. It would be a history of the feeling about the world and, as such, would stand alongside the history of religion as its equal. By the feeling about the world I mean the psychic state in which, at any given time, mankind found itself in relation to the cosmos, in relation to the phenomena of the external world. This psychic state is disclosed in the quality of psychic needs, i.e. in the constitution of the absolute artistic volition, and bears outward fruit in the work of art, to be exact in the style of the latter, the specific nature of which is simply the specific nature of the psychic needs. Thus the various gradations of the feeling about the world can be gauged from the stylistic evolution of art, as well as from the theogony of the peoples."*

—Wilhelm Worringer, from *Abstraction and Empathy*, 1908

This, also rings true. The feeling about the world, living in the world, is evident in one's art, in the style of which it is made in. Although, this feels somewhat like choosing a style, it is not. The

style is born out of yourself. The needs of yourself. Therefore, we may look to older styles and examine what was happening at the time the art was made. And what I like about nonobjective art is that it is the bearer of pure feeling. Even when looking to historical narrative art one doesn't need to know exactly what the characters were doing or the context in which the characters behaved to get a feeling out of the work. Either way, the work represents, to a degree, the time in which it was configured. For, out of the world we come to make representations of life.



Inspiration #30: 11<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross, 2019, Acrylic and Sand on Canvas, 48 x 48 inches

### **Time and Quantity of Proportions**

When dipping my knife into my paint it is a matter of time and quantity upon the palette knives. Mixing proportions depend on these factors when developing my color wheels. Of course, the



wheel itself is also about time, the wheels, I should deem necessary are my own. The light emitted through intervals of painted surfaces, the slices of colors so to speak, determine their attribution to the light. Violet being darker and yellow being lighter. Of course, these are simply names of colorless substances applied to the canvases I work on. What does matter most about the substance of paints, are their compositional constructions. What kind of binder or vehicle? What kind of grind? How small or large the particles of pigment are? How the lighting is? How even the coating of paint upon the weaves? For example, it would seem that acrylic dries darker than oil, particularly when the grind of pigment is larger. The change between wet to dry acrylics is greater than the transformation of oils once dry. Yet, our awareness of this is in question due to the time it takes oils to dry. Whereas, with acrylics, you can watch them drying given the circumstances are right. Needless to say, the brightest yellow in acrylic is brighter than that of oils. All that is needed is concentration.

### **To the Young and Bold**

Let us focus on the mind and body. It takes great strength and above all, determination, as Stephen Hawking said. Beyond the science of it all there is great humility in all of us. Understanding depends on it. We are granted great understanding through it. The mind is a fickle thing to some of us. To myself, it is my greatest ally. Yet there are storms. Yet again, beauty exists. We do find beauty as artists in this world and as a people on this earth. Please find the beauty in yourself and others. And you are beautiful. I would like to say that the mind is special and that there is much work to be done before we are able to use its true potential. I feel as though great pains exist and yet through most of it we still find hope and the strength to be optimistic.

The greatest asset to myself that strength training ever provided me was balance. Balance of the body and balance of the mind. Don't let go of the thought of it. You don't want to be a thick neck do you? Better to be of positive mind, body, and spirit than a curmudgeon in aging!

### **To Young Artists**

One thing a young artist must learn is to be prompt and to make good on engagements. You can be the best and most talented and most skilled at the art you make but no one will wait on you. That's how it goes. And you may have heard it before and you may hear it again, but this is reality. You make of it what you want. So, if the opportunity arises make it happen. Second chances in this world are far and few between. No one has time. I've said it before and I'll say it again, discipline is what separates the wheat from the chaff. And you may get upset at the skill of those who are showing who are younger or older than yourself, but my honest bet is, they showed up on time, regardless of their skill.



## **Touch**

Oil is superior in its sensitivity to touch. This is why. Love is transmuted this way! Plus, it is a finer substance than acrylic. Yet, when acrylic is in washes it is superior in light! It is the brighter material! Each has its advantages but all in all oil is deeper. Acrylic is brighter!

## **Toward the Indefinable, 2005-2022**

In my first two years of graduate school I was making paintings that illustrated the spatial effects of two distinct environments. I was combining into each work what I believed to be an extraction and simulation of the far reaching space experienced in Kansas, near where I grew up in Missouri, and the imposing space found in New York City; the two foremost experiences that could potentially describe my history of spatial observation. The idea was delineated quite literally using opposing visual techniques. It wasn't until my third year of graduate school that I became increasingly dissatisfied with these works that emphasized observation and the external world. I began to thoroughly question ideas of nature. Was it something more strictly tangible, seen in the landscape or cityscape, or rather something internal at its core, more psychological in my perception and less apparent in surface? I needed a means of working that would shake off the obvious references to the objective world. I wanted to deal more directly with what I realized to be a deeply human content rooted both in fact and visual phenomenon, the material quality of painting itself, as well as with personal emotion. My newly discovered understanding of nature was predominantly metaphysical in presence. (Not to be confused with belief in a divine force.) My attention in all areas of life shifted. I moved away from the current academic and art gallery trends and theories that had more to do with observation. I reviewed the history of nonobjective painting and artist's writings, philosophy, poetry, and cinema that involved emotion and the expression of the intangible functioning of thought to a greater degree. My thoughts were foremost directed toward furthering my awareness of the unseen content of life, what I believe to be the most compelling force within us, yet the most challenging subject. Painting that has left the boldest impression on my memory has often been emotive or nonobjective in content, more mysterious and elusive in retinal appearance, but never a mere shocking display of optical trickery and illusion. I have always felt a freedom with nonobjective painting that has allowed me to experience art and life more intimately, more exclusively within my mind and not the creator's. These works have encouraged me to seek a deeper understanding of the nature of myself, therefore of the world. This has to do with the paintings' lack of specificity directed toward the concrete world and rather toward a specificity of formlessness inherent to abstract emotion and introspective questioning, a psychological content. This too is a factual content, yet more elusive than that which may be observed in the tangible world. Meaning in my work now originates out of the expressive quality and movement of shape and color, and by the manner in which the shape and color is pronounced and situated within the rectilinear formats. Both shape and color possess the unknown factor, the mystery, where I believe the meaning to be concentrated. I am trying to bring this new form into the world, one that is guided by personal and universal content and is specifically recognized as such. I hope the form is unique both in its

personality and look, and that it carries with it the indefinable content of life, discovery, and mystery.

## **Trust**

“Without cannibalism and incest. A peaceful union. Incest, the fault of the strong. Cannibalism, the fault of the weak.”

This studio notation came to me upon completion of the painting, “Middle-Chapter, June,” acrylic on canvas, 42 x 42 inches 2023, as often thoughts accompany my process of painting. There is the preparation of thought, the present thought, and the afterglow of thought upon completion. Such was the case for this instance. Enlightenment, in other words, followed inspiration and the making and continues to follow it as an education. A bold studio note in this instance, “Frank,” to say the least!

It came to me this way, in order of thought, sequentially as stated. The abrupt abbreviations are my own, as to protect purity of the union.

My reflections are these: It is a commentary on our history as human beings, as well as a firm marker for a path forward. Who knows what the future may bring for our race? I remain hopeful. I have said many times before this that the moral realm is where I abide as an artist as to speak truths, facts even, in the face of destruction. In honest, things do not go awry. The truth is in the reactions to honest statements such as these.

Cannibalism and incest are two behaviors that cannot be retracted for the sake of our sins, and for the sake of a clean mind. Forgiven yes, but not erased through genetics.

Those who read in a positive trusting light, be at peace.

Innocence is at stake. Possibly, the reason for its being.

## **Trust is a Gift**

“The first modern artists who abandoned realism for abstraction made a dramatic break that rocked the art world. Today, artists still must make a conscious choice to make work about the visible world, or about something beyond it.” This is where I’m at, something beyond it as well as within it, but yes, often times emphasis is on one more than the other. I tend to emphasize nature, its presence as realized by me through abstraction, through both showing and depicting. And not to forget, we, ourselves, are part of its process. Eternity is the gift, our gift, nature’s gift... and maybe, if we’re lucky, its promise to us. But I have a feeling we must earn this.

—quote from [sfmoma.org](http://sfmoma.org), “*On Abstraction*”

## **Truth and Art**

The vocation of painting is tantamount to that of any truth seeker, be it the poet, the philosopher, the scientist, or the priest. Upon reading a lecture given in 1959 by Robert Motherwell, he states, “In this historical situation a few artists try to protect the purity and truthfulness of art...” And this is also true of our time. I am, above all, hopeful and optimistic that art done by serious workers within the field today also feel this way. Yet, it is a fact even still, that there are some who frown upon art’s ability to convey truth or meaning as if it were a joke to believe in such matters. This is why it is worth stating here that these are the few and the jaded when it comes to artistic endeavors. Their reasoning is irrational and ironic, as they, from the position of an artist, make comments and artworks about art that does little more than to point to their own insecurities and failures within a supposed failed system and art world. Wherein, the true reality is that there is no such thing as an “art world” or “system” of art. Not really. Not when speaking contemporaneously. Contemporaneously, there is no one legion of artists that goes on making different or the same types of art. There are, on the other hand, clusters of different art communities consisting of individuals that make art that has, in my humble estimation, little or nothing to do with each other. Some tribal art may be the exception, as their art is at times born out of a system of values decided upon by the tribal community. And aside from the occasional nod to some dead artist here, or to some living artist there, in one’s own work what is the dialogue with others actually? The answer is complicated as should be the case. The answer is that it has very little to do with others and at times very much. The artist firstly does his or her duty to express their personal experiences as understood by them, how else could one make something and know what will be received by the collective? This, one cannot know or predict. And, if there was to be an “us” when it comes to art making it is the type that suggests that “we” as artists seek our own truths, and that these individual truths speak, at times, to those who also are seeking truth and not to “all” of humanity.

## **Twilight**

It very well might be my answer! What is twilight, to me? A medium place. The root of all mystery! Where nonobjectivity and realism are suspended in grace. Where light gives and darkness. I don’t often think about it, but darkness usually takes and light gives! Yet there is a time in winter where I live when the weather turns on a dime from cold to hot, from ice ridden to moist, from death to life. In between is glory of a new kind to me! At which time I am plentiful of ideas. They grace me like, well... cats grace the moonlight! As many questions as there are answers!

## **Twonism I**

I thought it would change the world, you know? One book for them all! One book to describe the world at the time it was made! And now, well, well, I wonder if it even made a dent! We discussed everything back then, the gutters, what was happening in the streets – fresh and old, the bold sounds coming from hipster’s mouths, and most of all we were in Love.

With the beer of philosophies charged by nighttime’s indigo gestures of laughter in the streets trampling through bar life like jesters of a Godly Court. We took names, wrote them down with our pens made of happiness – and sometimes we destroyed them with banter of this and that kinds upon which our pens needed time to rejoice in memories of those sorts. Retorts to all the philosophies known to a man, in one.

A single book. Twonism. To end them all! And I look back at it now, and it rejuvenates me still to know I am that man. The hero who tried! And yes, I tried.

But all we seem to be left looking at are the same old clichés with the same old phrases to describe their appearances. Those very appearances I am suspect of have ruled me out! Sidelined us. I’m not the only one so you should know, to fight back! The world needs men and women like you. Honesty is rare. Share your findings whenever you can.

The wondrous thing is, the truth is, you will wake up on strange days and realize... then, Did I have a part in this? In the making of this grand machine? You will then question what you wrote down, for better or worse! And wonder why that power was granted you, after all?

And, well, why have we been trusted with this kind of power! And in that moment you’ll awake to understanding, you have earned it fair and square, like the paintings you made. Fair. And. Squares!

I Love you All.

## **Unity and Difference**

It would seem that the artist uses systematic thinking. At least I have tried. Yet, no matter how perfect his union with thinking, the system becomes flawed, over time. Well, anomalies occur. They happen spontaneously, but are sometimes overlooked at the time. I would like to suggest these as possibilities.

These anomalies, or moments... are what lead us on! You see, in my work, I see others both contemporaneously invested in the work, and through the experience or research online of older and historic examples of paintings, wherein I proceed. So, there is always an amalgamation of subconscious and conscious influences, some more conscious than others, attempting to get through to you.

The question, I suppose, is then - Which way do you work with them? Do you let them rule over your lives or slow down your thinking? Because either way you look at it, and either way you see it, and no matter what you do, connections will be made throughout time. Life is this way! So, recognize yourself in the work, foremost. The differences are subtle at times, yet, there. So go on in your way.

Assert yourself as being different, but at other times have strong humility. The human being is an anomaly as far as can be proven. At least in his capacity to think... profoundly! So, I say, be the anomaly! Now, get to work! Your minds may rest, then!

### **Universality in Painting**

The maturity of an artist seems to work this way. The longer you work the more intimate you become with your own and other's ideas and beliefs. The longer you stick around doing it the clearer it becomes. You recognize quicker by looking at the work of others your own sensibility and see in others work similar traits, ideas you may have in common. To make progress we push forward the ideas of our fellow students in the field of painting and work together as a race toward the establishment of varied non-vocal languages, toward a unity of multiplicity, toward the universal. It is not always this way, at other times we are working toward our own, more singular, voice. I am moving forward with a painting that shares a format with Brice Marden. I have retained what inspired me to apply my own voice – his format. The painting is to be grand, a sort of escape and arrival to a place of distance. A space that opens up wide in a manner that requires time to perceive. An unknown space of sorts.

### **USA Fellowship**

Having just received my news of not being accepted into the final 45 out of over 600 nominated applicants, I am discouraged from hard work, but what do you do when you get knocked down you get up and you get back to work. So this night will be dedicated to hard working. And if not hard working at this thing here, then what then?

Well, you try to realize what you did wrong and you give it a second go of it, if nominated again. The reality is hard to take, but it's nothing I did that stopped it. Once you present your way, that's all you can do. So, on this note, being an artist of styles myself I would like to present to you the intro I would go with if I had it to do all over again. I would pull from the following writing and I would have gone with a more diverse representation of what I do.



Inspiration #33: 3<sup>rd</sup> Station: Jesus Falls the First Time, 2020, Acrylic and Sand on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches

**Useful** – July 21, 2007

*“In nature, all is useful, all is beautiful.”*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, from *Nature*

The boy said to the girl, “Why are you of so much use to me?” The girl said, “Perhaps it is because I am of no use at all.” The boy did not respond. Abstract painting is much like this. You look at it... and are silenced.

## **WarGames**

If there is such a thing as confusion of the civilian and military mindset, and I don't mean on the surface, but embedded deeply within the individual then it seems to me the civilians are the most powerful, according to my logic! With Trump as our president, and with the moralistic sapping of wills he has done to us over time, having created a warring-like mindset within the individual, it would seem the debilitating fear is now in him, more so than within the people. With fear at an all-time high due to the instability of the government under crisis. Hence, his ever-increasing reactionary behavior. Of course, ultimately this means, we as a people, have the upper hand at this moment in time, strategically, that is. But one could also say, he has won, since we have become enslaved in degrees by now, manipulated even, by his moral timidity and flawed thinking during a real crisis. But, I'm just an artist, anyone for a game of chess?

## **What is an Artist**

What is an Artist? I would first like to start by answering my own question with an answer – He is a citizen who suffers much! He is an artist by trade, though he is many kinds of people at once! His creations bring him pain. But joy is involved. Through his process many things have taken place. Inventions of sorts. Paintings, poems, songs, dances, joyous activities of which all have their upbringing. Meaning, she raises them like a child. He is no philosopher but is philosophical about life. She is no mystic but raises them as such. The spirit is involved. They are beings so to speak of light and movement. Christ is in them, yet he guides his hand when heaviest! He is not religious but close to God. He is of Love. It is his way. I love him. He is his son.

## **When Talking – To Timothy Johnson, my Former Editor**

I would like to say that pride is necessary in life. We wish it didn't take pride to stand tall, at times, but, it does. One must pull themselves up by the bootstraps, so to speak! To get the task finished. To move forward. But I would also like to say that pride and skill are one and the same. Too much pride and it's arrogance, too much skill and it's braggadocio. We must keep the ego in check at times. For others to breathe, to feel, to begin to understand. When beginning anything it takes a great amount of courage! If the people feel as though they will never reach the heights you have gained for yourself, they will feel shunned and likely will fall into abandonment of the task at hand, into discouragement. But, at other times, that person must understand and let the person providing the lessons speak. So, if you have something to say, then say it, otherwise, listen.

So, here's what I have to say. Go to bed! It's 4:48 in the morning and you have done your good work at this time! Lol, no, that's just what I'm saying to myself currently!



But really, it's a challenging thing, speaking up! It's very difficult at times to say what you want to say. People are rude, they will talk over you in a heartbeat spouting nothing but mouthfuls of shit! And hence the good people go unheard. My editor, he's a good person. We have communication issues at this time. I don't know what to say, or how to say it. He's a good man, but, he's gone under the radar. For the most part. It's eating me up on the inside.

He thinks I'm probably off my rocker by now. But, it's far from the case, at hand. You see, beauty is a terrible thing at times, let's one find out about things they didn't know, beforehand. But, it's actually a good thing, knowing! You think I'm selfish but I'm not. You would like to believe I cannot hold a realistic conversation, but you are wrong... the difference now, I am willing to listen, at this time.

My opinion hurts, so I won't say it at this time. Tone is everything to me. So, have good tone and you may speak the way you want to about it. Otherwise, it's a lost cause. I will try my darndest to be good to you while speaking, and to listen. I know you now. But, listening is a two way street my friend! And at sometimes, more like a four-way street with people around. Distractions are necessary. I get that, but, when meeting about something that has taken years to work on, I do not expect to be distracted. Thank you.

### **Why Balance?**

So you can live your lives. So you can get along together. So the scales don't get tipped too far in one direction! So each of us survive! You asked, and now I've spoken. Upon my exhibition, The Correspondence of Color. But I'm speaking of the black and whites now! You see, it's always about balance!

### **Wild at Heart**

Wilding will always win! Yet, I am torn between wilding and planning. My paintings go between these two zones. Spontaneity and preconceived pictures. Intuition and alert stratagems. But the wilding, well, always wins out.

### **With My Face to the Work**

Agnes Martin said, "I paint with my back to the world." And in doing so she created masterpiece after masterpiece from the bounds of her studio in New Mexico. In stating as much, she fulfilled the hermit lifestyle to a large degree having left New York after enduring much suffering and having already established her reputation as a painter.

As influenced as I am by her work and lifestyle, I must take a different stance as I look at myself as a painter. I rather prefer the saying, “I paint with my face to the work.” It is every bit as significant as saying what Martin did, but, it better identifies with the work and not the world. Yet at the same time, it is neither accepting or in rejection of the world, it simply says nothing about it, nor is it a statement ‘against’ the world, as if to thwart the world like Martin’s saying does.

Martin wrote something about not identifying with the work. She said, if I am remembering correctly, that it is dangerous or that there are pitfalls in doing so. But, as I make the work I am responsible for it. I cannot give myself entirely to the notion that I am but a passive and anonymous receiver that creates by the dictates of someone or something else. It is by my will and my decision that the work gets made and viewed. I go on in this way making decisions, and indeed some decisions come through myself as suggested by others in the process, but it is I who makes the decision to put the brush to the canvas and it is I who decides to go on in such a way.

### **Working as a Medium**

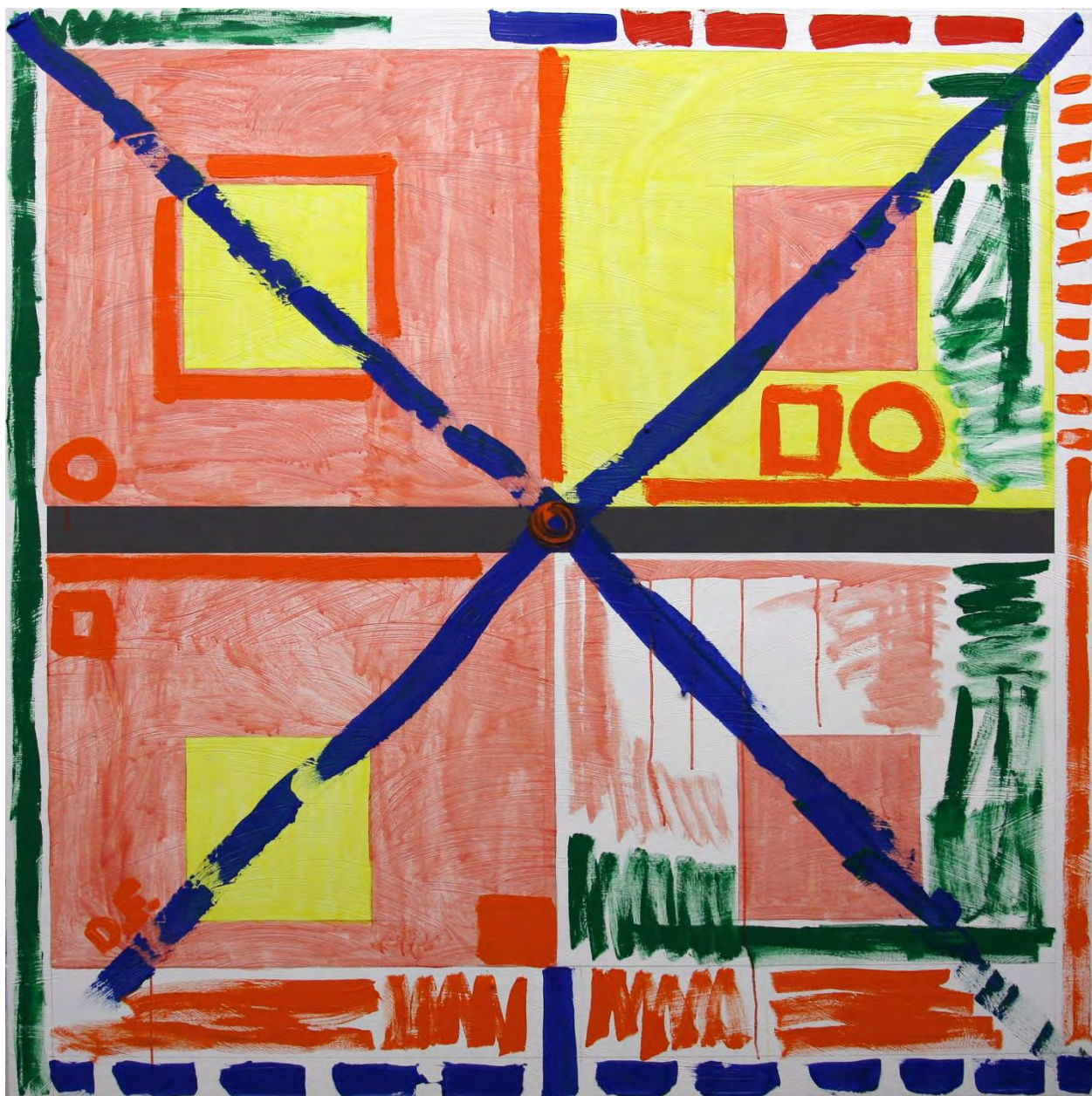
One must give up skill and be entirely “there” (present) working in the moment to work as a medium. Partly, it is about obeying the voices and the self at once. Your nature comes out and illustrates via marks and symbols. Sometimes the marks themselves are symbols, of which only I, to my “knowledge” can read. My dad hates mark making that appears unskilled. He will likely go to his grave not understanding my raw work. The voices I hear mostly at work are my family’s. I say partly obey, because it is important that the voices I hear resonate, only then do I follow and most times it is my following only the positive voices.

### **Zeitgeist**

Some people in the world believe that they are born artists, some believe they are born to do things, and some believe the same. And because you are born to be something or to do a particular thing, and to fulfill a particular path does not mean that you are not being taught how to do this particular thing. You see, this world and yourself, together is the guiding action toward your dreams and goals. We are a continuation of the past. Yet, we are swimming in new territories. I have a friend who believes otherwise, that we are not taught to be artists. That we simply, are, artists. Well, it is one and the same. We are artists from the beginning and we are taught to be artists. This is my last writing for my book, Twonism II (Thoughts, Essays, and Poems on Life and Art).



Inspiration #41: 12<sup>th</sup> Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross, 2019, Acrylic, Sand, and Nails on Canvas,  
48 x 48 inches



Inspiration #46: Urgency, 2020, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 x 72 inches



## Zen and Painting

*"Naturally Zen would proclaim, 'Not this, not that, not anything.' But we must insist upon asking Zen what it is that is left after all these denials, and the master will perhaps on such an occasion give us a slap in the face, exclaiming, 'You fool, what is this?' Some may take this as an excuse to get away from the dilemma, or as having no more meaning than a practical example of ill-breeding. But when the spirit of Zen is grasped in its purity, it will be seen what a real thing that slap is. For here is no negation, no affirmation, but a plain fact, a pure experience, the very foundation of our being and thought."*

—D.T. Suzuki, from *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*

This paragraph written by D.T. Suzuki and published in 1964 well summarizes the nature of Zen to a reduction of factual experience and present being – to the epicenter of Zen. With respect to Zen and to Suzuki, does it not seem that to slap the student might be a bit aggressive and in turn provocative of agitation within the student further promoting an unclear mind? Perhaps, in time, a good student would reflect on his or her experience and gain further understanding of the nature of Zen, having been slapped by their master, but, the viewing of a painting can function in this way too, no? Yet, painting does so without the need for violent or aggressive physical contact. One may observe forceful, even violent gestures on the canvas and yet one is left with passivity, a choice to continue to observe or to walk away, and furthermore, the viewer must consult his or her own mind as to their decision of what they are experiencing. Is this not more productive toward enlightenment, a sort of self-motivated learning? The student/viewer has a decision. Here, I am likening the viewing of a painting to that Zen moment of a slap into awareness, to that primordial trigger into a feeling of momentary enlightenment, but know that I am not a follower of Zen. I am a creator and follower of paintings. At the same time, you might consider that I do take a liking to Zen's direction, no matter how directionless it may seem at times. Being someone who is devoted to a discipline, I can relate to Zen's practical application in life, to its sometimes systematic processes, to its overall aim toward goodness, no matter how nihilistic it may seem at times. It's just that, it is also my belief that we should move away from things that reduce themselves to a final act of aggression to teach a lesson. I hope I have illustrated a better way.



1010-for Betsy Baker, 2022, Acrylic on Canvas, eight panels, 116 inches octagonal

## Studio Notations –

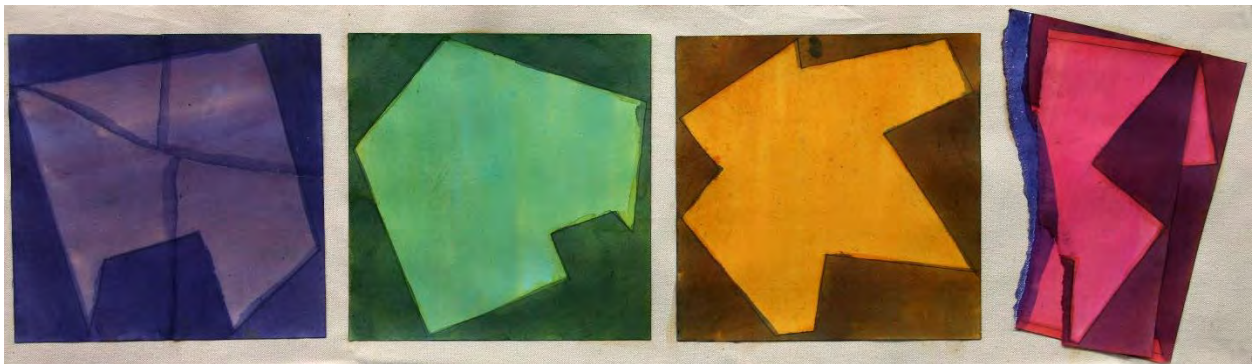
**Notation 1:** Using green, blue, orange, and red tonight in the studio. With one coat of ink on paper it was not enough. It needed two. The yellow-orange needed it, and the others were too thin. So, all four got a second coat. Color is difficult and hard to do when needed.

**Notation 2:** The color was used to crop the shapes. One coat was not enough. The second coat was only applied to the surrounding void around the shape creating a foreground and background of lighter and darker juxtapositions.



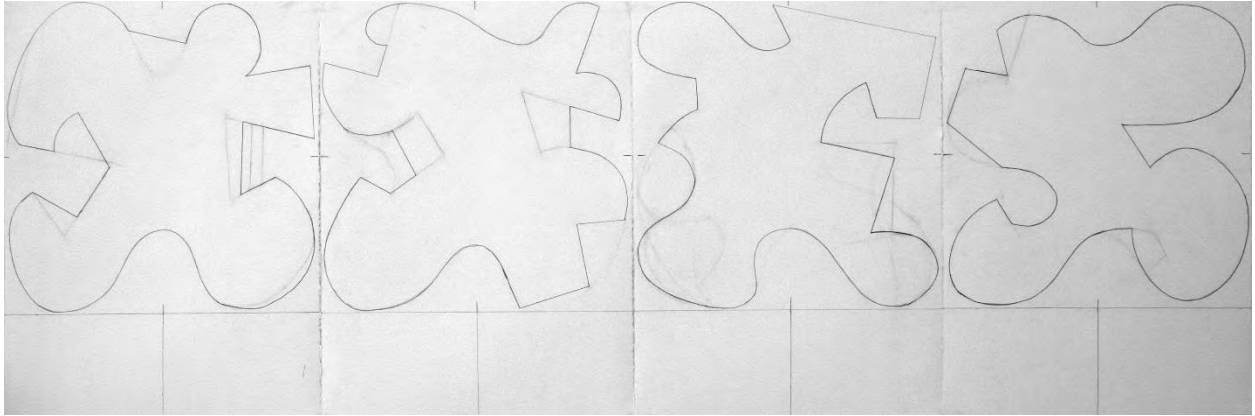
Notation 2, 2017, Shellac ink on paper

**Notation 3:** Having not been satisfied with the above notations I decided to go back into the coloration of the studies. Below is the finished study for the outer four designs of my Paradise Painting. Which, in turn, I didn't use but was influenced by them, the way the colors were aged and/or weathered feeling to myself around the shapes.



Notation 3, 2017, Shellac ink on paper on canvas





Study for, Twonism XXV: Duels, After Brice Marden



Twonism XXV: Duels, after Brice Marden, 2017, Acrylic and Oil on Canvas, 48" x 156"

**Notation 4:** Although the above image is a standalone piece, it acts as a preliminary work to Twonism XXVIII: Symmetry (Paradise Painting Revisited, after Brice Marden). The upper portions and shapes in the above piece were painted in acrylic washes. The upcoming painting, which will be larger and in a slightly different format, will be painted using oil in thin layers instead of the acrylic washes.

## Notation 5:



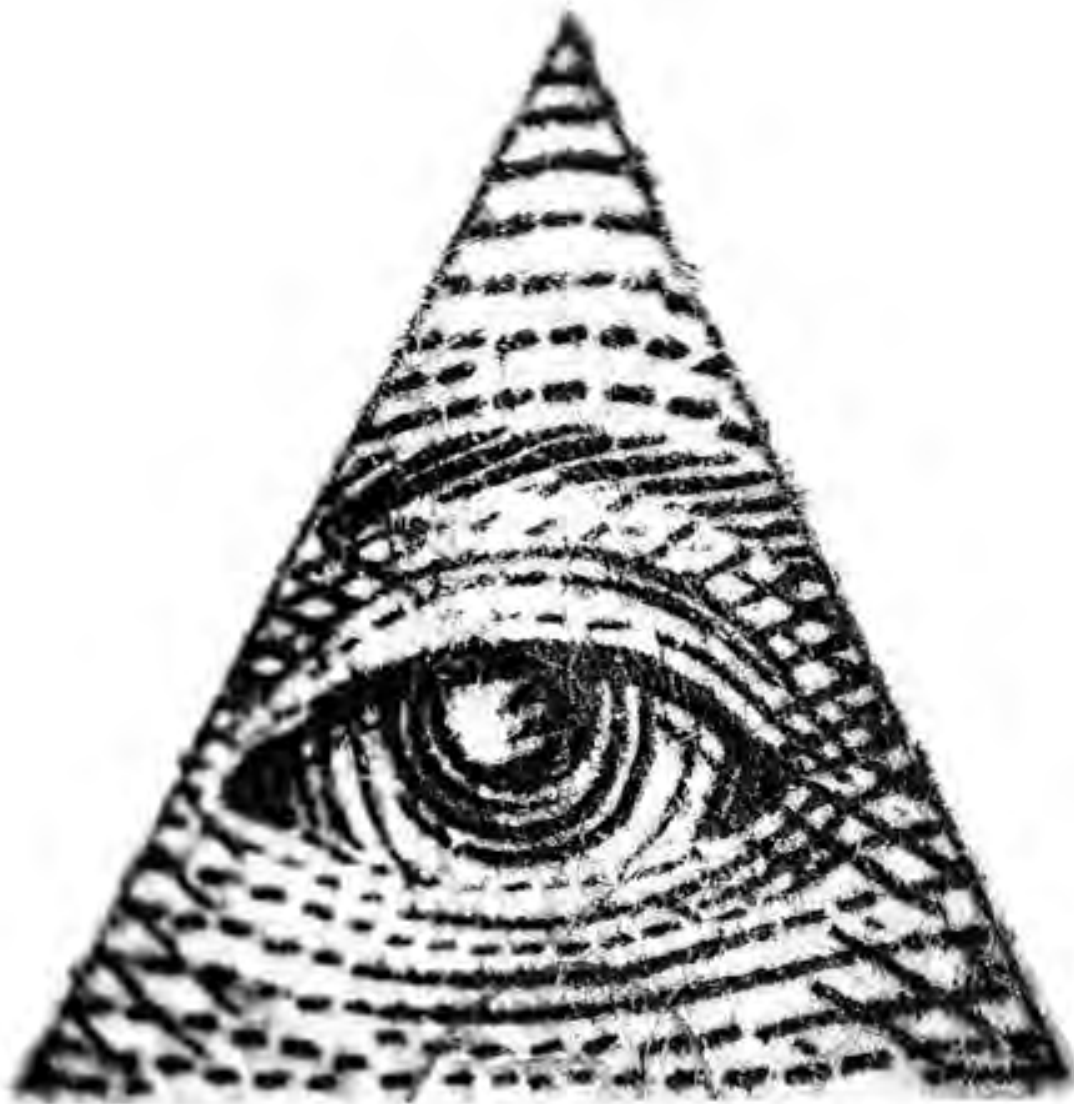
Strainers for *Twonism XXVI: Future*, and *Twonism XXVII: Past*, 2017, 72" equilateral triangles

The inspiration for my two triangular pieces came to me one morning. The inspiration dictated that I create two triangles with a circle in the middle of each, divided in half down the middle of the circles. I will soon begin to stretch the triangles with canvas. Each piece will be yellow-green and grey. One will have a grey circle, two tones of grey divided down the middle, surrounded by yellow-green all the way to the edges. The other will have a yellow-green circle, two tints of yellow-green divided down the middle, surrounded by grey all the way to the edges. I will begin this project soon. The stretchers arrived today, Monday, March 20, 2017. I will likely begin the stretching of canvas on Wednesday, March 22, 2017.

I am eager to begin. Since my inspiration, I have researched the likenesses of the shapes. The “Eye of Providence,” otherwise known as, “The All Seeing Eye” came to mind. I did not know that it was a symbolization of God; “The All Seeing Eye.” I also didn’t make the connection that it was on the United States of America’s one dollar bill, as famous as it is for its iconography.

Now, I work on a six-foot square format frequently, therefore, it was natural for the inspiration to be made on six-foot equilateral triangles. But, this is interesting to me because a six-foot

equilateral triangle is six-feet by six-feet by six-feet creating a dissonance between the traditional meaning of the “All Seeing Eye” and the symbolization of the triangle’s size in feet. Six, six, six, to my understanding, is symbolic of “man,” per the bible. Also, it is said to be, “The Mark of The Beast,” per superstition. I like the notion of it being symbolic of man. To me this is indicative of some balance. Balance between “man” and “God.” Then again, it occurs to me, that man is by nature superstitious to varying degrees so I also like the idea of the structure of the triangles representing “The Mark of The Beast,” or evil, as it were. And the iconography in turn might represent “God,” or good, as it were. It is thought that the beast is a man, and is symbolic of the worldwide political system, as some suggest. Also, some say that in the bible it speaks of the beast ruling over, “every tribe and people and tongue and nation.” (Revelation 13:7) But, I have not read Revelations for myself.



The Eye of Providence or The All-Seeing Eye



The Future is Bright, and, The Past, 2017, Acrylic on Canvas, 72" equilateral triangles



## Notation 6:

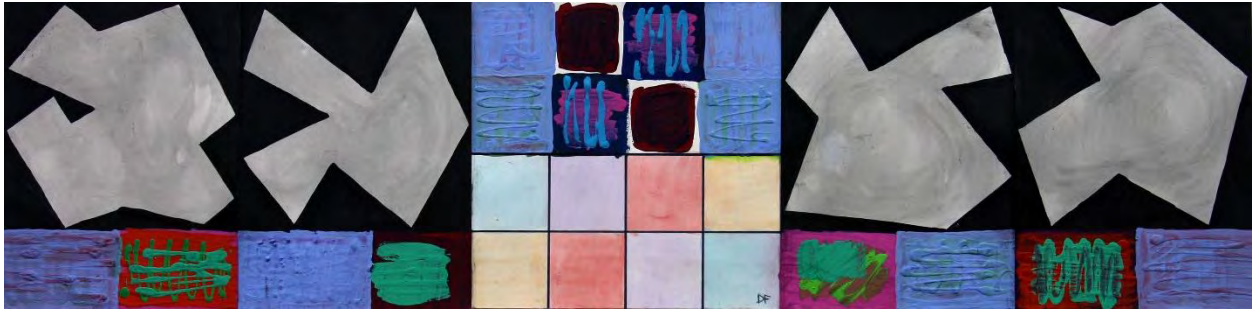
### Universality in Painting

The maturity of an artist seems to work this way. The longer you work the more intimate you become with your own and other's ideas and beliefs. The longer you stick around doing it the clearer it becomes. You recognize quicker by looking at the work of others your own sensibility and see in other's work similar traits, ideas you may have in common. To make progress we push forward the ideas of our fellow students in the field of painting and work together as a race toward the establishment of varied non-vocal languages, toward a unity of multiplicity, toward the universal. It is not always this way, at other times we are working toward our own, more singular, voice. I am moving forward with a painting that shares a format with Brice Marden. I have retained what inspired me to apply my own voice to his format. The painting is to be grand, a sort of escape and arrival to a place of distance. A space that opens up wide in a manner that requires time to perceive. An unknown space of sorts, an unfolding of time.



Brice Marden, 2012-15, Uphill with Center, Oil on Linen, 48 1/8" x 192 5/8"

**Notation 7:**



Study for, Twonism XXVIII: Symmetry, (Paradise Painting Revisited, after Brice Marden's Uphill with Center) 2017, Shellac Ink, Marker, Gouache, and Acrylic on Paper, 10" x 40"



Study for, Twonism XXVIII: Symmetry, (Paradise Painting Revisited, after Brice Marden's "Uphill with Center") 2017, Oil on Canvas, 48" x 192"



## Notation 8:

### The Moment Writes Itself

I look without looking  
What do I see  
I see nothing

I look without seeing  
What do I see  
I see nothing

I see nothing

I rest

Do not fixate on objects

If so

You will see so much that  
You will not see  
So much  
That will pass you by

Why do I write this way  
Because the moment writes itself

Now I will address the object that I see.

I see nothing but marks, shapes  
This painting, I like it.  
It is of myself.  
I can recall that I loved it during the making

Like a man growing wheat I loved it  
I put my love into the mark making  
Always I put my love into this  
I cannot help the fact that others cannot see this if they cannot see it

I love what I do  
It permeates myself  
This, is a facet of my process  
All of the process is as one unity

The highest  
The lowest  
Painting  
Writing  
Bound together



Twonism XXVIII: Symmetry (Paradise Painting Revisited, after Brice Marden's "Uphill with Center") 2017, Oil on Canvas, 48" x 192"

## Symmetry

Inner symmetry doesn't take on the outward form inherent to the symmetrical  
It mustn't be predictable  
One shape leads to the next  
One mark to another  
One thing constructed to look like balance is not necessarily balanced  
Two marks upright and vertical on one end one mark wide on the other end same color made to  
be one unity  
This, and everything  
Is  
Everything  
Alive is the composition  
Behind is the mind  
Why?  
Because thought interferes in perception  
Experience  
This is being  
Experiencing is being  
Become one  
Do not interpret just be one with the experience of life  
That is all  
This is painting



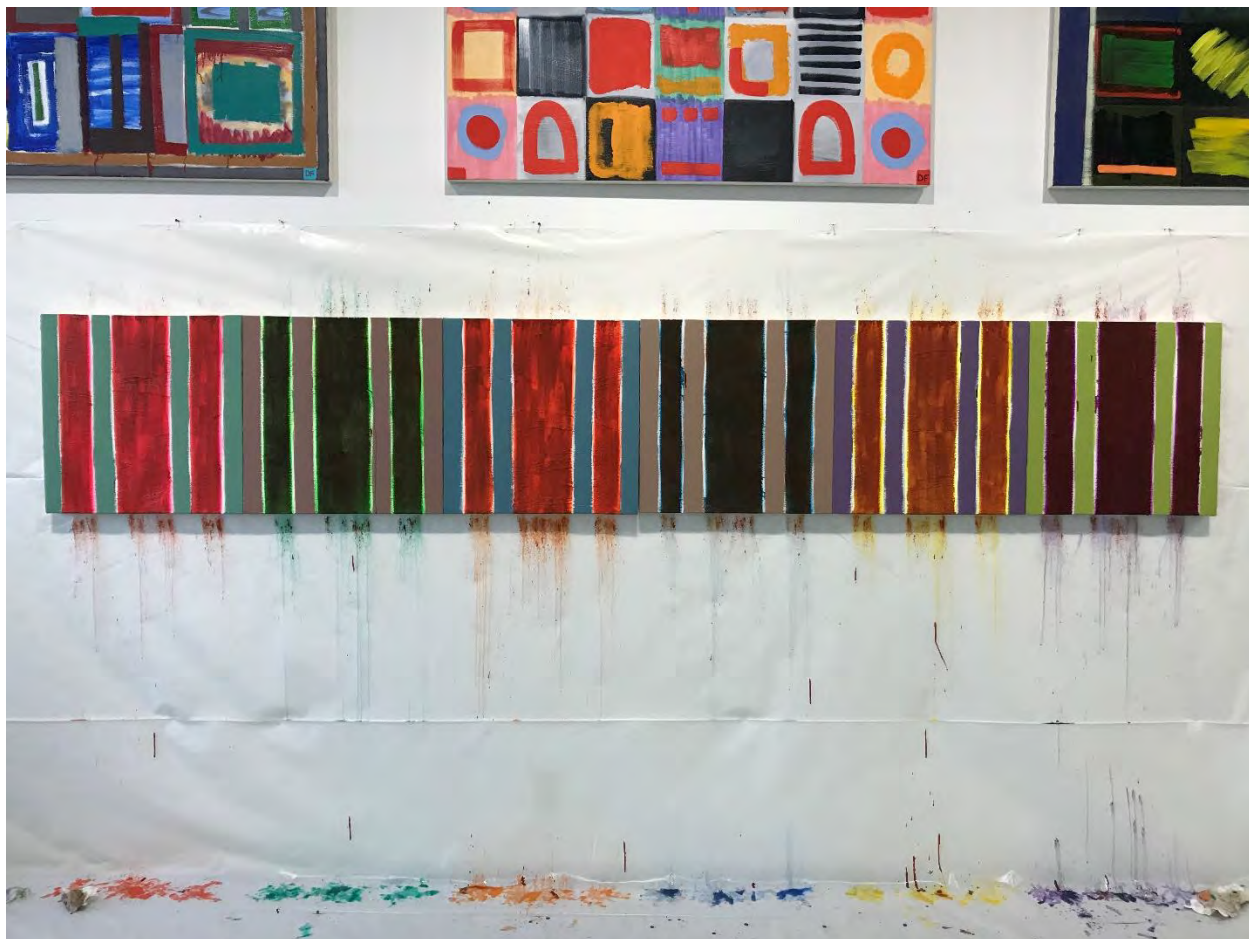
7<sup>th</sup> Century Cambodian, Lintel with Anthropomorphic Dragon in Foliage, Metropolitan Museum of Art

### Notation 9:



Painting in early stages

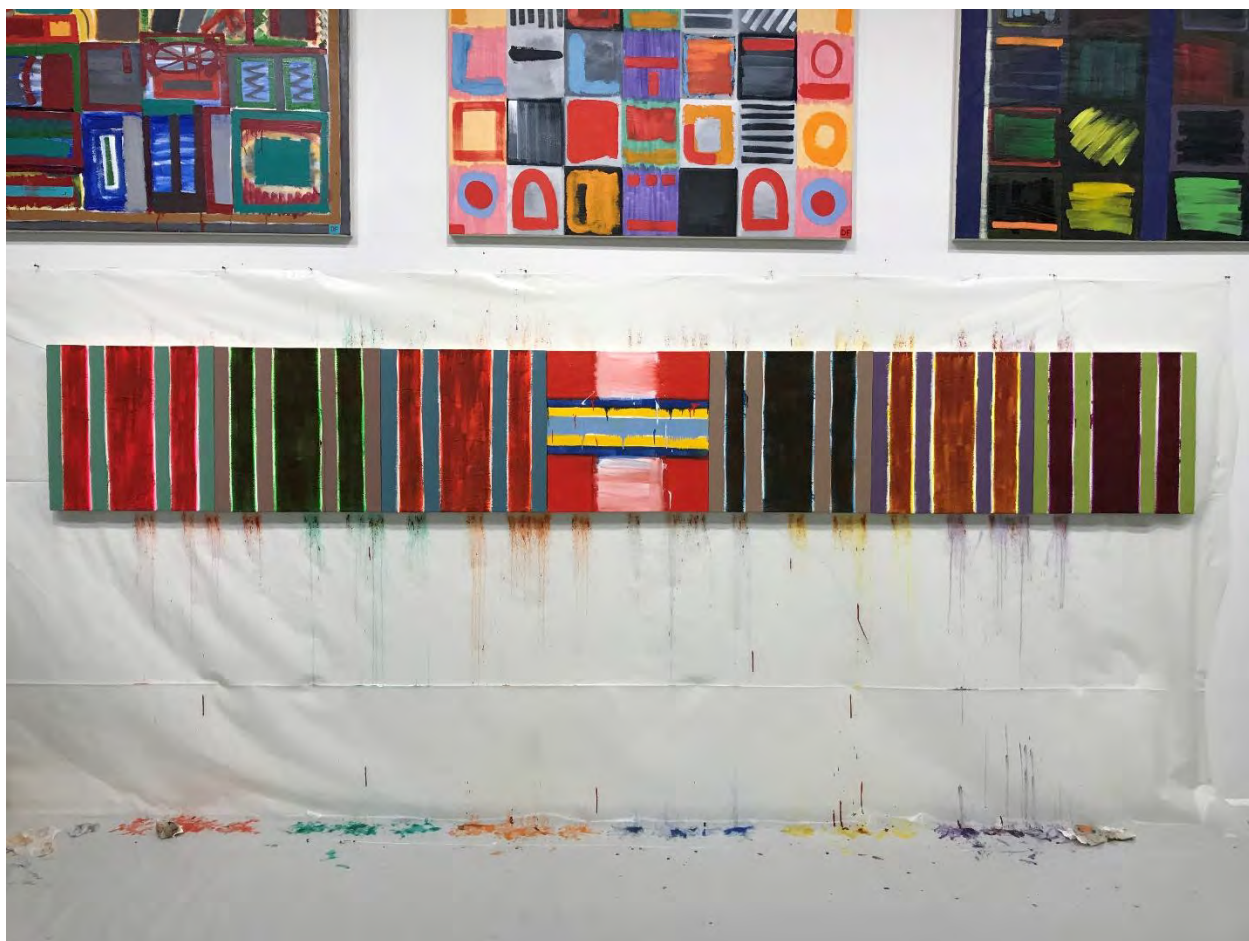
Six panels using acrylic for the greyish stripes and oil for the pure colored voids. Marion Street Art Materials fluorescents. I decided the panels were too bright. Obnoxiously so, to the point of headache inducing, uncomfortable response in duration, so I decided on a more natural coloration.



Painting in early stages

Using a Burnt Siena wash I painted one uniform coat to all the panels to see what would take place. The underpainting successfully shows through, also I left the edges open to show the brighter colors underneath the Burnt Sienna coat. But, sitting and looking the work doesn't feel like me. The piece is yet incomplete. Needs something. Debating on top and bottom panels to unify the piece and to bring it more into my voice. The panels will be gridded, top and bottom, I believe. I will start with the bottom panel once the Siena coat dries.





Painting in early stages

Sitting and looking, staring even, into the piece, frustrated I look around to the pile of paintings resting on the floor next to me. Facing outward was the center panel. My previous small painting not intended to be part of this painting. I tried it out in the center – I loved it immediately! The painting is now headed in a good direction and there is a place to rest. I will allow the panels to dry first then build the bottom panel at least. Not sure yet if it will be built the length of the piece or if I will divide the span into two panels for more practical transportation and/or to aid the design.





Twonism XXXII: Family (Completed painting) 2017, Oil on Canvas, 42 ¾" x 171 ¾"

## The Greeks

The idea of perfection comes to mind. The classical. The Greeks. The ideal that one can reach perfect form. The balance of Archimedes. The worth of Medusa. The feeling of Zeus. The value of an avalanche. The meaning of the masses? Protection from thyself. The meaning of thyself? Protection from the masses.

Three columns: one Doric, one Ionic, and one Corinthian. The empty base, the Doric, goes all the way to heaven. Perfect form.

A single architrave, enclosing nothing, extending beyond sight, to the corners of the earth it extends. Perfect form.

A painting, like the architrave, extending beyond sight to the left and right, straight as Apollo's arrow. Empty, breathless, taking nothing, and giving back. Like the gods of old, perfect symmetry, perfect form. Perfect form. This painting will be called, Family.



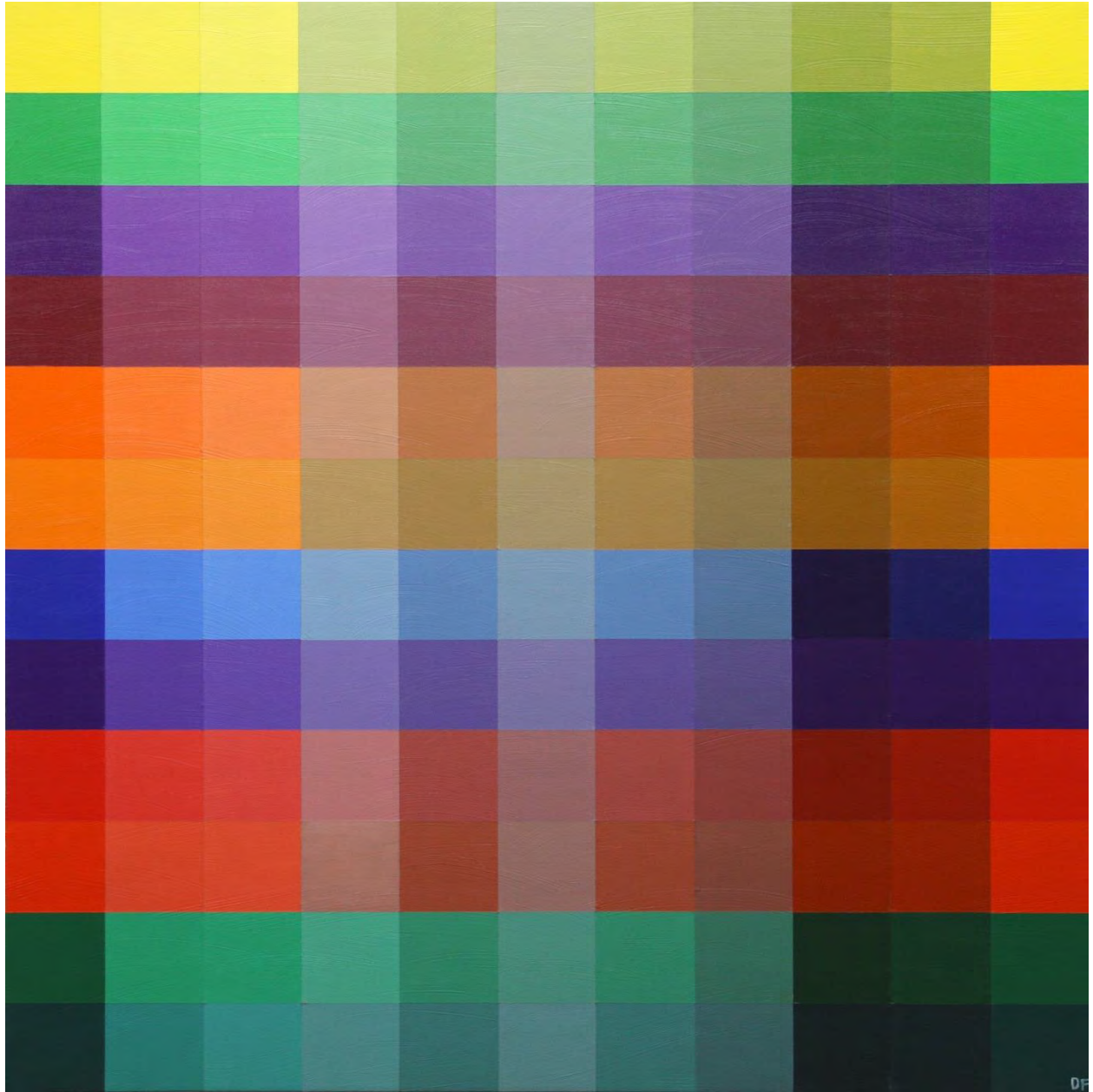
Leonardo da Vinci, The Last Supper, 1495-98, Tempera, Mastic, Pitch, Levkas, 15' 1" x 29'

### **A Brief Analyses and Comparison of my painting, “Family” to, “The Last Supper”**

Chaos on the left symbolic through the orange of Jesus's garb with its more anxious coloration/saturation – harmony on the right through the pale blue of his garb. Order on the right mostly, tamer discussions with deceptive and agitated speech happening on the left. Worldviews of the times come to mind, the intolerance of women and women's possible intolerance of men. Yet, Mary being on Jesus's right brings his trust for her to mind, as if the others have fallen for her way at the moment. Perhaps their union, Jesus' and Mary's to each other is telling of relationships in the sense that later they will talk about what has taken place, in peace, wherein judgement might arise. They both seem exhausted, Mary and Jesus, and Mary –exacerbated even, yet something else is upon their faces as well? I cannot isolate the emotions; the behaviors are complex as well. That's the thing about da Vinci's work – movement. Just like the Mona Lisa, his expressions that he painted are lifeful, eternally.

Structure and movement are my comparisons. Shape as well. Yet, I was unaware of this at the time of my producing my piece, titled “Family.”

### Notation 10:



Chromatic Neutrals, 2017, Acrylic on Canvas, 72" x 72"

### Sound and Flawed

This painting is mathematically composed; all but one rectangle, which needed adjustment. And I say this because were I to build a career out of only making mathematically composed paintings it would be unfortunate. I will say a few things about this painting of mine, since I made it, that are negative, but know that I love it as a painting, just not in the same way as the

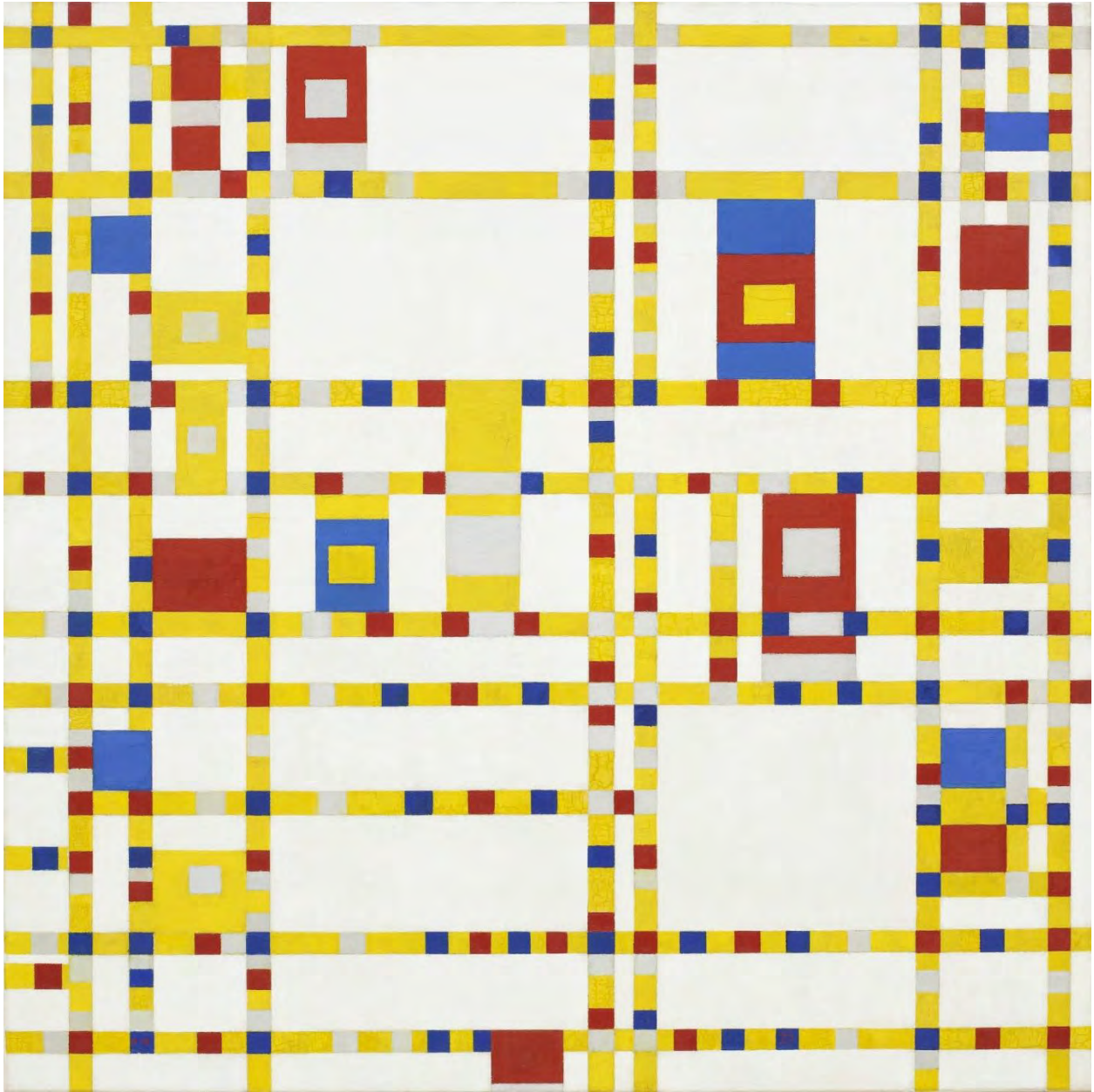
others, the ones with spirit. You see, it is a foray of logic, of technicality, and process. It was a necessary step in my maturity as an artist, but, you see, it is a technical painting, mostly. Many decisions went into its making, many not necessarily having to do with strict logic, as well. For example, the organization of colors was my own intuitive notion. I had an initial idea of wanting to bounce the viewer around a bit from light to dark, warm to cool, with contrasting rows of color. The major to do about this painting is its color. It's beautiful, I get that. And much joy can come from a good solid technique, but, it lacks spirit. It lacks imperfection. And I like this occasionally, to know that I have accomplished something of skill. But, it's the paintings that are filled with mark making and flawed that I like the most. The ones that are not so clean in appearance, have some age, have some newness too, and most of all, spirit! On one hand, the seductive nature of a painting like this frightens me, and on the other hand, I understand the joy and positivity some have experienced before it as reassuring. It's just that, the deeper beauty is in the works of mine that allow you to dig in the most, that are not so striking in appearance, not so mathematical in their thinking. And careers have been made from mathematical paintings. And I despise the fact that these artists have possessed little ambiguity in their work. That their paintings, now that I know, have been executed with precision is fine. But know that I make paintings which are sound and flawed in one.

### **Balance III**

In this painting are one hundred and eight different applied colors physically. In looking you see one hundred and thirty-two. This is a visual phenomenon that only color does. It was not planned for but happened. The surface was planned, but many nuances came forth that were not planned. Such as the shine of the violet and the surprising buildup of paint in the corners of each square that are not squares but rectangles. The rectangles, each one, is six inches tall by six and a half inches wide. The rectangles appear to be squares. This is a reality that occurs when we fill in gaps of information but there are no real 'gaps' of information there to witness. There is an illusion of depth, which also was not my plan. The different rows and columns come forth into our vision and recede back as well. Also, there was one block of color that my eyes stopped on abruptly, so I lightened it and now the painting reads well. My proportions were correct in measuring the paint. Yet, the color red-orange somehow escaped my systematic way of things. I like this. The painting in person is balanced now. I say, in person, because one cannot derive the same meaning from a painting in image form. Not true meaning anyhow. Painting is a humanistic and natural process no matter how systematic one thinks they are becoming in making the paintings. This is part of my realization, as well.



### Notation 11:



Piet Mondrian, *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, 1942-43, Oil on Canvas, 50" x 50"

### A Dialogue

In 1942-43 Piet Mondrian was working on his grid for *Broadway Boogie Woogie*. A masterpiece to signify an era. A zesty piece struck alive by yellow, red, and blue buzzing around the white of the piece. For its time, it was unique in its uncharacteristic playfulness within a systematic approach and remains that way. But, our era is a different one. Coming three days later, I write this in regard to my painting, *Bomber*, after having painted it.

It has occurred to me, the similarity between Mondrian's work and my own. What I would like to say is that my painting feels fresh and alive in a similar way to Mondrian's, except that I have broken from its strict format of hard edges. It is fair to say that I have a systematic approach to a degree but the color is left open. Just the grid was left open for compositional possibilities that could go beyond a preconceived notion of form.

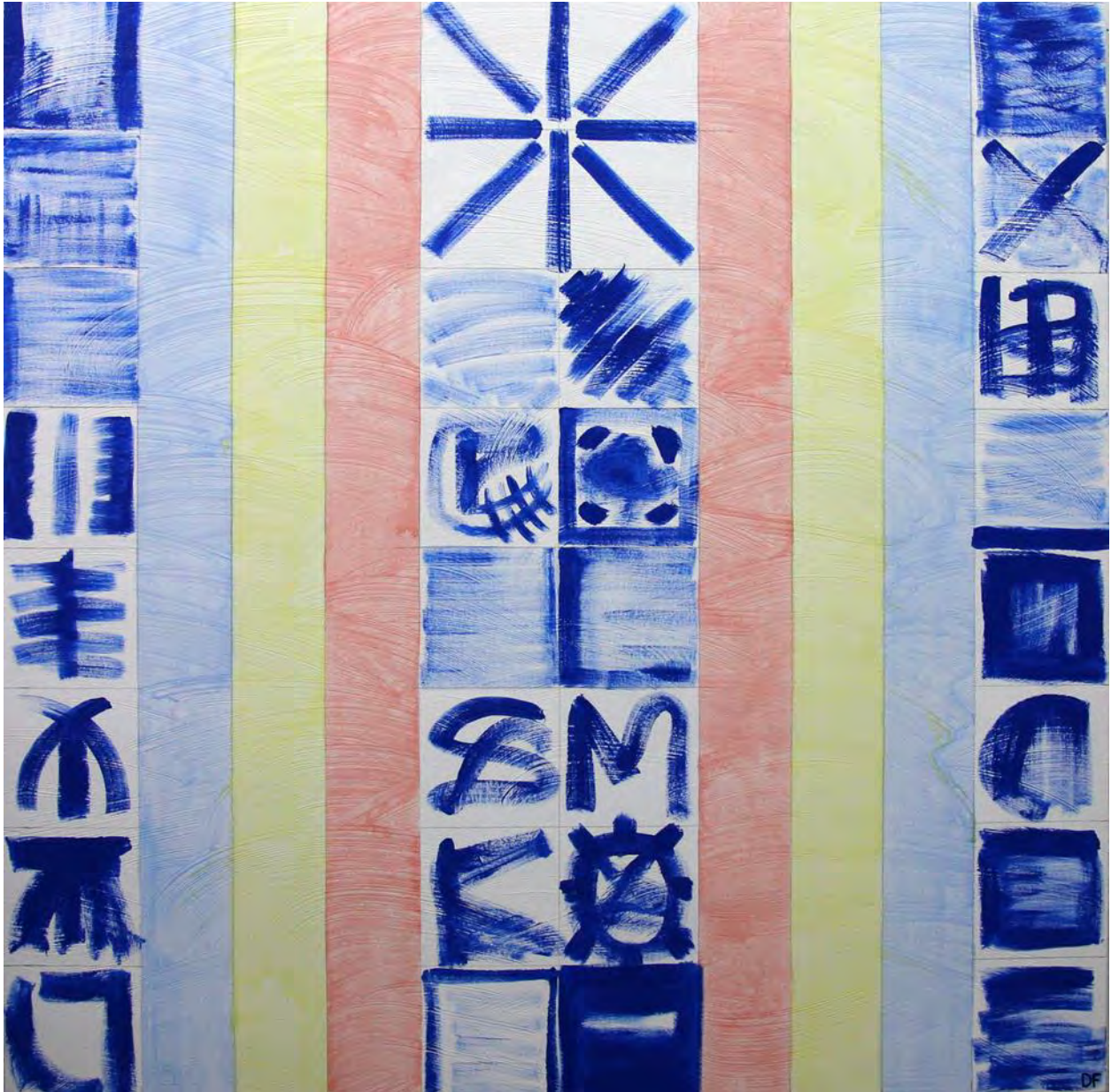
In advance of the painting the inspiration for Bomber was there. I made a sketch for it. The color inspiration for the two vertical bands of orange came after the format for the grid and after the idea of multiple blues and reds for the painting. Then, the title came to me. What is most surprising to myself about it is the empty white spaces. These, in a large way, lift the painting into the sky and out of the past. It might be my best painting yet.



Bomber, 2017, Oil and Acrylic on Canvas, 72" x 72"



## Notation 12:



Inspiration #1, 2018, Acrylic and Graphite on Canvas, 60" x 60"

## A Painting

What I feel is the pull of abstraction.  
Back to my roots.  
Alone, in a warm room, with fan draft.  
The warmth of the bulbs overhead.  
The colors all in jars ready to go.

The palette in my mind.  
The heater that turns off and on again.  
The stillness, the quiet.  
My mind.  
In one single direction focused on the painting.  
My mind.  
Focused, to make change a reality.  
My heart.  
To soften some edges.  
My heart.  
To form bonds.  
Unity.  
The mind and heart as one.  
The bond between it, the painting, and I are one.  
Yes, soon.  
Very soon.  
It will come.  
And it will lead me.  
Tell me where to go.  
First the grid.  
The lines.  
The graphite against gesso.  
No.  
First, the building of a stretcher.  
A fresh stretcher.  
A wooden stretcher on which nothing dies, only lives.  
The smell of the woodshop.  
The heater.  
On and off.  
The journey down wooden steps to an open space where I will stretch the canvas.  
The gesso.  
Brushed on in waves side to side.  
Then, yes, then, once it dries – THE GRID.  
Life.  
Living.  
Where we travel down roads of emptiness, togetherness, and stability.  
The grid.  
Yes, the grid.  
On which the human race has lived for eons.  
For centuries.  
For years.  
And I will join hands with those humans.  
With all who ever created to create again.  
Something of worth.  
Something of merit.  
Something inert.

And exert.  
A work of art that gives and takes.  
Provides light, an abundance of light and warmth.  
And a work of art that needs warmth and eyes.  
A mind to touch what it holds.  
A mind to begin to understand the secret of centuries past.  
Creation.  
The world we love.  
The world inside of you.  
That world.  
The one with which you hold.  
And love.  
And cherish.  
And develop like a child.  
Because this is what we do.  
A painting to help others find themselves.  
One that has searched for lifetimes to find itself.  
And is still searching.  
A painting that seeks and finds.  
One that others can find and console and be consoled by.  
A painting for escape and a painting for arrival.  
One for strength and one for weakness and one for survival.  
The hard edge, strength.  
The soft center, weakness.  
Clarity and strength.  
The unknown and weakness and survival.  
You may encounter each!



Coffee Pot, 1650-75, Japan, Metropolitan Museum of Art





Tureen with Landscape, Late 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Japan, Metropolitan Museum of Art

**Notation 13:**



The Trinity, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 36" x 36"

Some of you will not like what I have to say about this piece, but I need to get it out. Making the painting was difficult, it took patience above all, for my answers to come. I love the painting. It's important to me. But it has resulted in the most pain I have ever experienced from a painting. I love it, I mean the painting I feel is perfect. I'm satisfied with it, but the pain was so heavy that I could not even make it to either school to teach today. I didn't sleep well. I couldn't. I will leave the subject matter open for the most part other than this part. There is a religious presence to the painting that comes from within myself that I hope you get. I don't even know where exactly it came from or why at this time, but it was painful to do and pleasant to look at. I thought I was



just going to make a painting not some sacrifice to the gods of painting or to her. I don't really know what else to say other than it has been a very enlightening experience.

What I realize now is that the artist is a vessel, two days later after writing the last paragraph. I mean, I realized it while I was working, I usually do, but this time was different. In other ways, I've stated this before. For example, I am not religious in the traditional sense of going to a place of worship. I pray very infrequently. I am not devoted to a church. I am not confirmed in a specific faith. I remain open for the inspirations to come through myself. I am a vessel. If you look closely you will see a trinity. The candelabra is at the center. I did not and could not or hope to plan for this. I am not religious. I simply do what I have done for a very long time. I am in the tradition. The contemporary longevity of living is central to my focus of painting and to my being alive on this earth. I am not a priest. I live like one. And what I mean by that is I am ultimately single, celibate for the time being. It has been a very wise choice on my behalf, as I have gained a great understanding of living for now. I think it's a good painting. But then again, I think most of my work is good.

#### **Notation 14:**

#### **The Sublimity of Nature**

So, here I am in the studio every day working next to one of the greatest modern painters still working today. In the great city of Sedalia, Missouri, where knowledge is bountiful, and the paint stays dry and wet all of the time on both sides of the studio. So, you think I would let a day pass by when I don't wonder about my place in this world? Well, I don't. Because you don't get a pass doing nothing. And yesterday my dad finished a great painting. One of the best I've seen him do in my time.

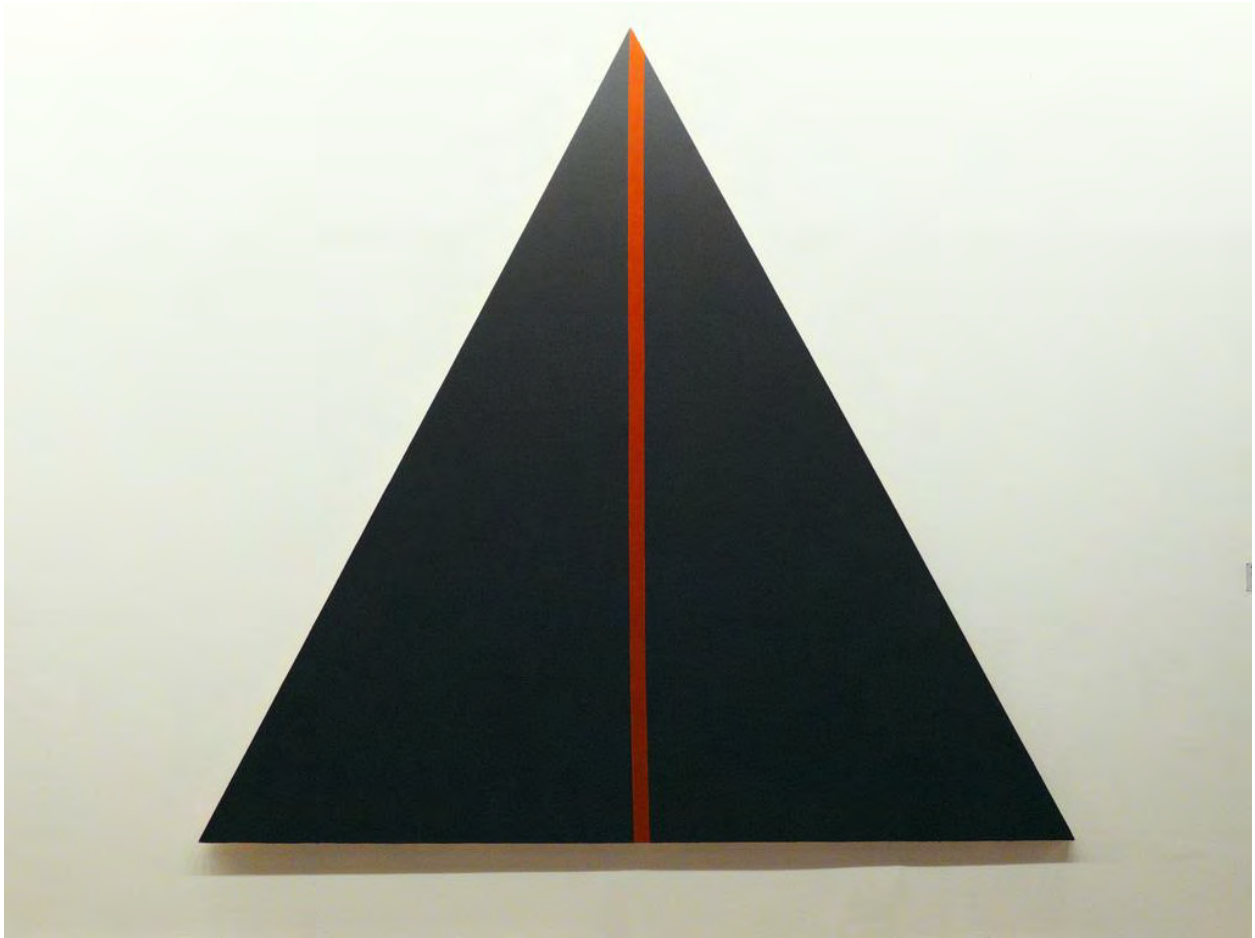
It is timeless. Equal to the grandest I have seen here on this planet. It is titled Nightfall, Orange.

He is on top and at the height of his game. And if you think he hasn't played the game long enough he is 74 years of age and doing his best work. Making strides is not easy at his age as you all know. But he is.



Douglass Freed, Nightfall, Orange, 2018, Oil on Canvas, 48" x 72"

### Notation 15: On Fighting



Barnett Newman, *Jericho*, 1968-69

This painting by Barnett Newman is perfect. The line down the middle being just a bit to the right signifies a man. The red and black, murder. But he was no murderer, I highly doubt, but, a man must be willing to do so in the name of safety. Of course, murder may not be the right name for it; murder signifies unlawful death to another person. Yet, it is justified to think such thoughts. A man must be willing to fight for just action to move forward in this world. Above all, he was a leader.

### Notation 16: Working as a Medium

Around six years ago, I remember being struck alive by images of the paintings of Hilma af Klint. The article claimed that she had made some nonobjective abstractions that predated Malevich and Kandinsky's earliest forays. I was in disbelief, naturally. I was taught, like so many others, and in my own research I had come to understand that Malevich's nonobjective work predated all other nonobjective abstraction. But, my view was under scrutiny to be changed. Since that time, I have come to realize a couple of things about it. For one, perhaps it is

less meaningful than I had originally felt it was to be first, I mean nonobjective abstraction we now know goes all the way back to cave painting. Secondly and thirdly, I have yet to believe that Hilma af Klint was creating fully nonobjective works at the time and one of the writers in her catalogue raisonne states that not only were Malevich and Kandinsky involved in making pieces at that time but also in creating manifestos... yet, Hilma af Klint also did her own work on the subject of painting through writing. You see, history can be proved from a distance so long as it is factual. And trust me, there are journals and such to prove Klint's worth in that vein, according to my book on her.

For starters she was a medium when she painted and described herself as such through writing, in her notes about it. She stated, "The pictures were painted through me, without any preliminary drawings and with great force. I had no idea what the paintings were supposed to depict; nevertheless, I worked swiftly and surely, without changing a single brushstroke." And this, I couldn't have said it better myself. It is the same way that I work when I paint and draw. She also happened to sign her automatic drawings she created as a medium, D.F., which according to the catalogue raisonne I am reading represents (DeFem). I don't know what DeFem means but, at least I'm more comfortable knowing now I'm one of the few in art history who has written about working as a medium. And it so happens I'm not the only one who has signed their work with D.F. I loved coming across this!

During the time science proved that there were waves that could not be perceived by the human eye, the x-ray was invented as well as was discovered electromagnetic waves. It goes to say it was in the air in more ways than one. People have difficulty though in giving credibility to it. Particularly to the psychic reality of thought. Therefore, a medium, writing about yourself in this way, is particularly difficult. And even more so to convince others that it is a reality. And then some who understand or are said to believe in it simply don't like to talk or hear about it. I'm guessing it scares them, but it shouldn't. Even though there are recorded seances throughout history, I for one, have not worked this way. With myself, it is a regular occurrence upon the light of day and during those moonlit nights.

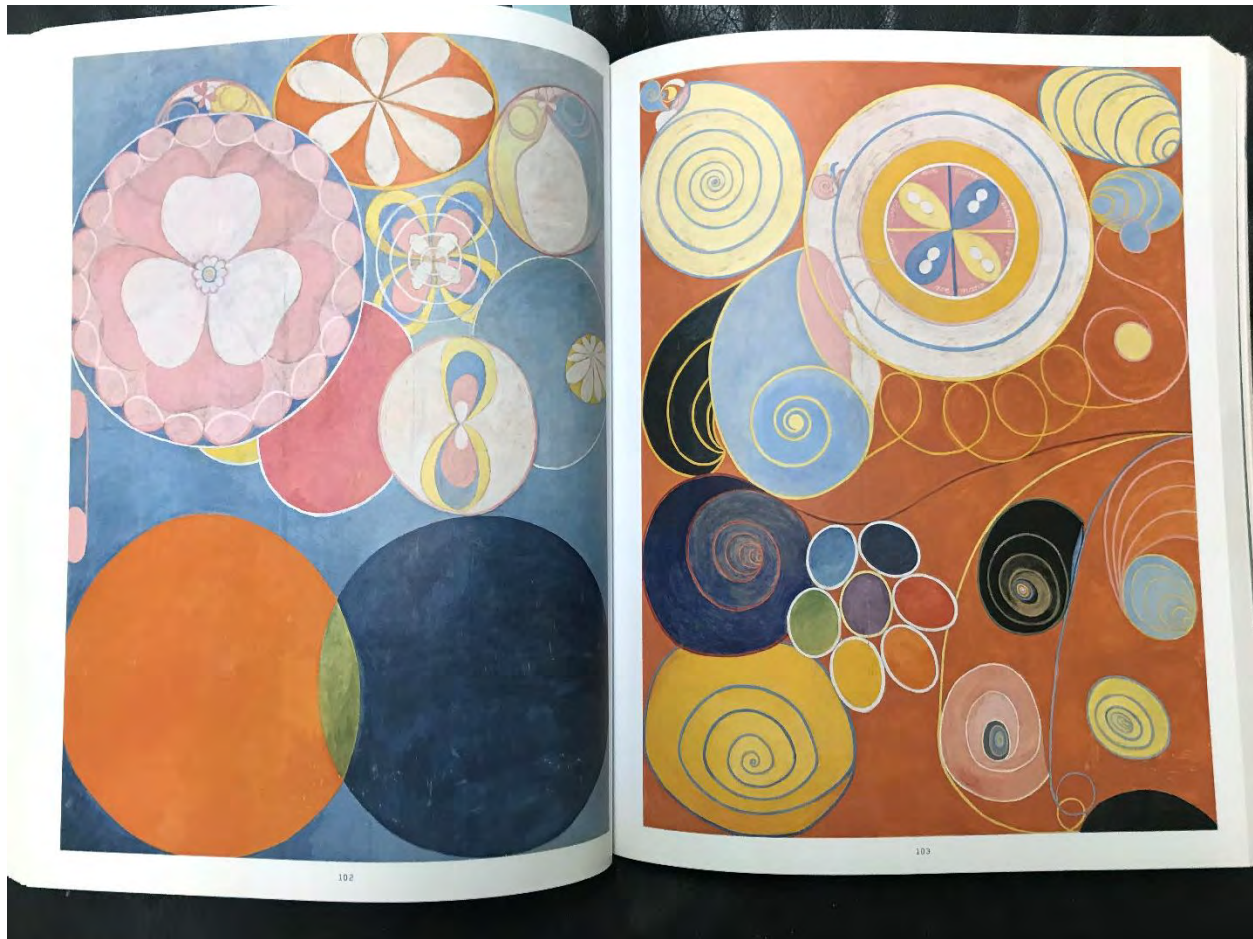
Anyhow, Hilma af Klint went on to make her phase of works titled, "The Paintings for the Temple." In these works, are mandala-like compositions, lotus blossoms, and other spiritual and scientific looking imagery such as diagrammatic layouts, writing, botanical forms, illuminating areas of color, spiraled shell formations, and beautiful, beautiful harmonies of tone and coloration. The works from this period are large in scale as well. And some eight feet or so vertically in size by four to five feet in width, perhaps larger even.

What I'm realizing now from my reading on her is that we have had similar thoughts in our beliefs about life and painting. She clearly, as is stated in the writing, did not believe in true opposites, or if she did, that they only manifested themselves in physical form, in matter, within the physical realm of man and woman. She believed foremost in unity, and that the development of the physical world moved from it to multiplicity (wherein opposites exist), and finally in its return to Oneness.



“Hilma af Klint: Painting the Unseen” Installation view Serpentine Gallery, London (3 March – 15 May 2016)





Hilma af Klint, The Ten Largest, No. 2, Childhood, Group IV, 1907, and, Hilma af Klint, The Ten Largest, No.3, Youth, Group IV, 1907

### Notation 17:

#### A Matter of Color: Strawberries or Triangles, It's All the Same

Today I get the opportunity to take a somewhat misinformed article to task. I will attempt to make my points clear by using an example of a painting I finished recently. First, I suggest to the viewer to look at the image of strawberries in a dish manipulated by, Akiyoshi Kitaoka. The image is an important part of the article, and then to read the article after looking at the image if you would like to understand where I'm coming from. Point by point, quote by quote from the article, I will attempt to explain to you why the quotes are false that I have selected:

"...our brains have evolved to color correct. It allows the colors we see to look the same no matter the lighting."



This quote by the author of the article is false. We perceive color subjectively and due to the environment in which the color is situated, the context. Our senses respond accurately to reality at most times. What colors are the strawberries composed of and what colors surround the strawberries actually?

Next, we have this quote to think about . . .

"In this picture, someone has very cleverly manipulated the image so that the objects you're looking at are reflecting what would otherwise be achromatic or grayscale, but the light source that your brain interprets to be on the scene has got this blueish component," Conway told me. "Your brain says, 'the light source that I'm viewing these strawberries under has some blue component to it, so I'm going to subtract that automatically from every pixel.' And when you take grey pixels and subtract out this blue bias, you end up with red."

First of all, if you are looking at this image of strawberries on a monitor, the objects or image you're looking at is not 'reflecting,' the image is projected to your eyes. This is to say the light source is the monitor. Secondly, my eyes perceive what Conway refers to as a 'blueish component' to be more specifically blue-green. As for the rest of Conway's statement, it is in a language of Conway's own that I'm unsure about my understanding thereof.

Nevertheless, the red that we see is due actually to the green component surrounding and permeating the object, the strawberries in this case. And to be even more accurate, the strawberries, I say, are red-orange, due to the surrounding color of blue-green. In other words, we see blue-green's compliment in the grey pixels—in the strawberries, which are red-orange. Where the grey pixels reside as neutrals, our eye/brain complex sees the neutrals or greys imbued with red-orange. The neutral, by context, takes on the color reversal of its surrounding color. Now, onto the next debunk which is not so bad.

"Conway said this illusion is also helped out by the fact that we recognize the objects as strawberries, which we very strongly associate with the color red, so our brain is already wired to be looking for those pigments."

Here, I would say that our memory of what strawberries look like helps in our acceptance of what we are seeing to be red, or red-orange in coloration, but it is not *why* we see what we see.

Here is where I would like to direct you to the image of my painting, "Correspondence of Color," as seen below. Take a look at the green row of colors with what are grey squares in the middles of the greens. The grey squares should appear pinkish in coloration in duration. Furthermore, every row of greys in the painting surrounded by a specific color in duration of looking becomes the surrounding color's reversal, or complimentary color.

The image of the strawberries is actually arbitrary in a color sense because I have demonstrated with my painting that we perceive red when a neutral grey is surrounded by green. Turn those strawberries into triangles of neutral greys and the rest into arbitrary shapes of blue-green and we would see red-orange triangles and blue-green shapes. This is to say color functions similarly no matter what shape or image it is a part of. Onto the next quote:

“You'd think we'd have learned our lesson by now, but there's something about the mysteries of color and perception that continue to fascinate our collective conscious. Especially when we can argue about it.”

As for this last quote, I agree! Color remains mysterious and an absolute joy to discuss, for some.

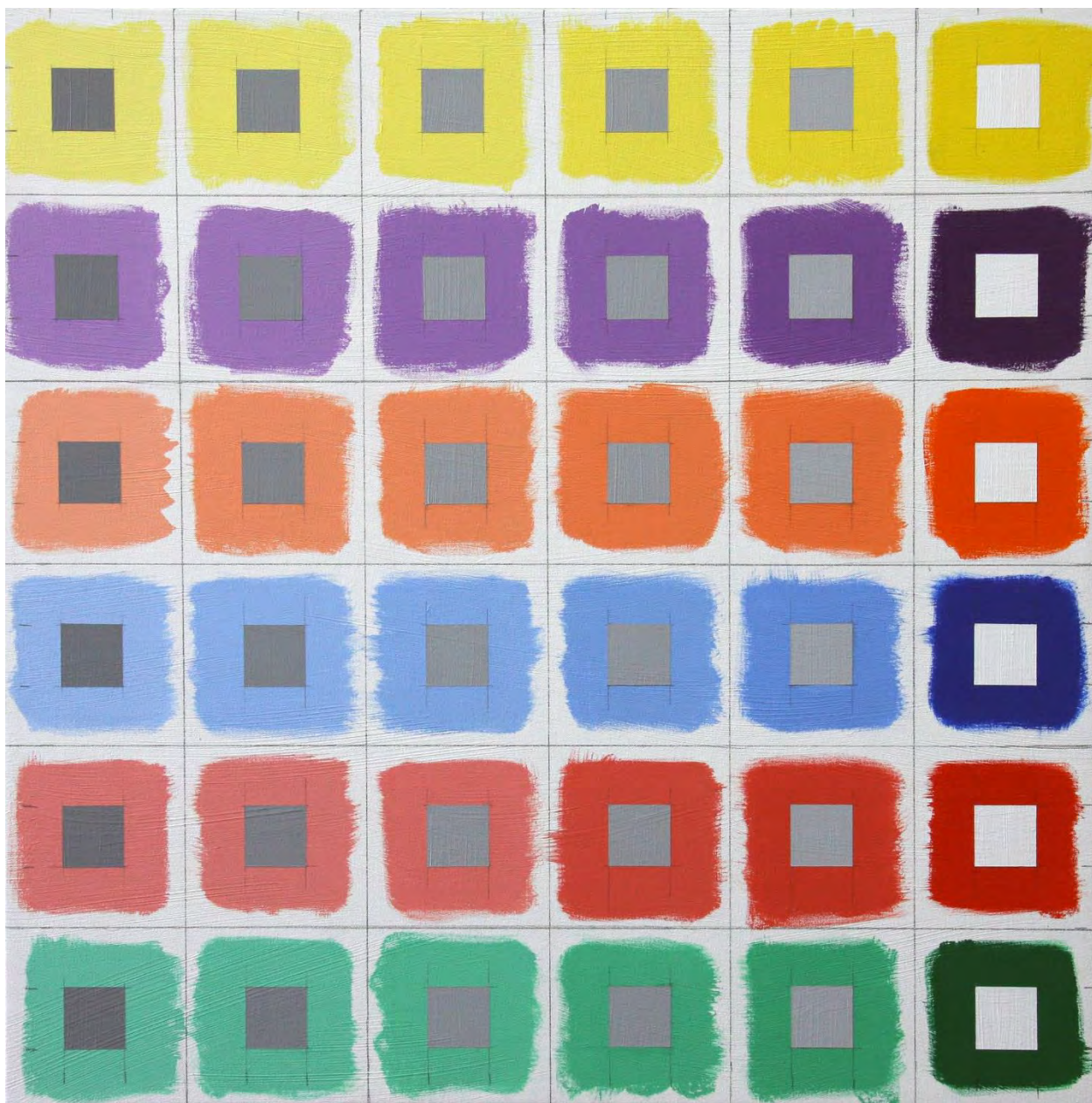
—Kaleigh Rogers, from, *VICE Media LLC, 'Motherboard,' 2017, "Remember the Dress? This Picture Has No Red Pixels—So Why Do the Strawberries Look Red,"*

[https://motherboard.vice.com/en\\_us/article/this-picture-has-no-red-pixelsso-why-do-the-strawberries-still-look-](https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/this-picture-has-no-red-pixelsso-why-do-the-strawberries-still-look-red?utm_source=wildhair&utm_content=inf_256_3702_2&utm_medium=social&tse_id=INF_16c6bd60fec311e6a22fa5876bd4fd44)

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Digital image by Akiyoshi Kitaoka



Correspondence of Color, 2017, Acrylic on Canvas, 36 x 36 inches

#### **Notation 18:**

#### **Notes on the Front and Back Covers – August 24, 2018**

Since painting the front cover for my book, I have done further research on the matter. What came to me one day in the form of a painting of ink on paper was something similar to a trident. Earlier in the afternoon on the same day I had researched the trident, a symbol associated with

Poseidon mostly. He could, at his discretion, strike the trident on the ground to create water where there was none. Prior having investigated this, over the summer months I was drawing the pond at State Fair Community College. At times, I found myself drawing and painting a fence that wasn't there. The fence surrounded the water as if to protect it from others. Around that time, well, even prior to it a snake figure I had drawn one night with a two-pronged tongue came to myself as a symbol of evil. I then modified its tongue to be a three-pronged tongue and named it the good snake. This figure took place on the top of the design for my back cover. Of course, it is ambiguous knowing this for others, but I'm sure of its moral clarity. The two snakes beneath it are representative of my mother and father's way, together they are good. So that is how, to a degree, I got there. Also, I am employed at SFCC where the pond is.

Now, sitting here writing, I realize the luck I have stumbled upon in recognizing the symbols. Last night I walked indirectly into the studio after smoking a cigarette outside the doors. I waited and then went in, and directly opened my book by Rudolf Arnheim that I had set out for myself a week or two prior, "The Power of the Center," is the name of the book. The page I opened it to immediately without any prior intentions displayed two images, the first of which I noticed momentarily and the second one thereafter. The first image I saw was of the staff of Hermes, the Caduceus. It struck me immediately as what I had drawn on the front cover and powerfully as such because Timothy, my editor and I had been just discussing its relevance to the book. So, I researched it further online as the book described its formal qualities and not its origin.

The Greek god Hermes was the fertility god foremost, as he is referred to in the text I read on him, a messenger god and a god of healing and peace as well. And the Caduceus is noted to be of importance with regards to its medical implications of healing powers as it has a likeness to Asclepius's rod, yet they are not the same thing.

However, I am no mythological academic, therefore I do not know the Caduceus's meaning exactly, outside of some minor research in the online Encyclopedia Britannica. Sitting here, what I can say is it would seem that the Greek God Hermes' name may have to do with the word hermit and hermetic, and as much as I write about isolation and solitude, it makes sense that this is the symbol I used for the cover.

Metaphorically speaking, much of what I have written is this way, the purpose of my writings, many of them, is to not only educate young artists about the ways of art and the world, its lonely lifestyle, but to somehow sooth their understanding of art and to warn about the dangers of the solitary lifestyle should one cease doing. Like a balm to your skin, at times I am writing with care in mind and lovingly so. Undoubtedly, some find my writing to be off-putting due to its possibility that at times it might be too pretentious, high-minded, and of high-concept. Yet, I assure you my tone is the way it is to maintain the integrity that fine art deserves, and with all due respect, I am just as humble as I am arrogant in my writings. It would not be fair to point to one quality and to undercut the other about myself. A level ground is what I am seeking, but not only for the writings, also for my work to function more caringly within the world.

While painting the covers of my book I was a medium with a religious context flowing through me. I know the person of whom I had in mind from our local coffee shop and in this instance, he was guiding myself in thought. Will, is his name, and the Cohen's. Yet, some inspiration that

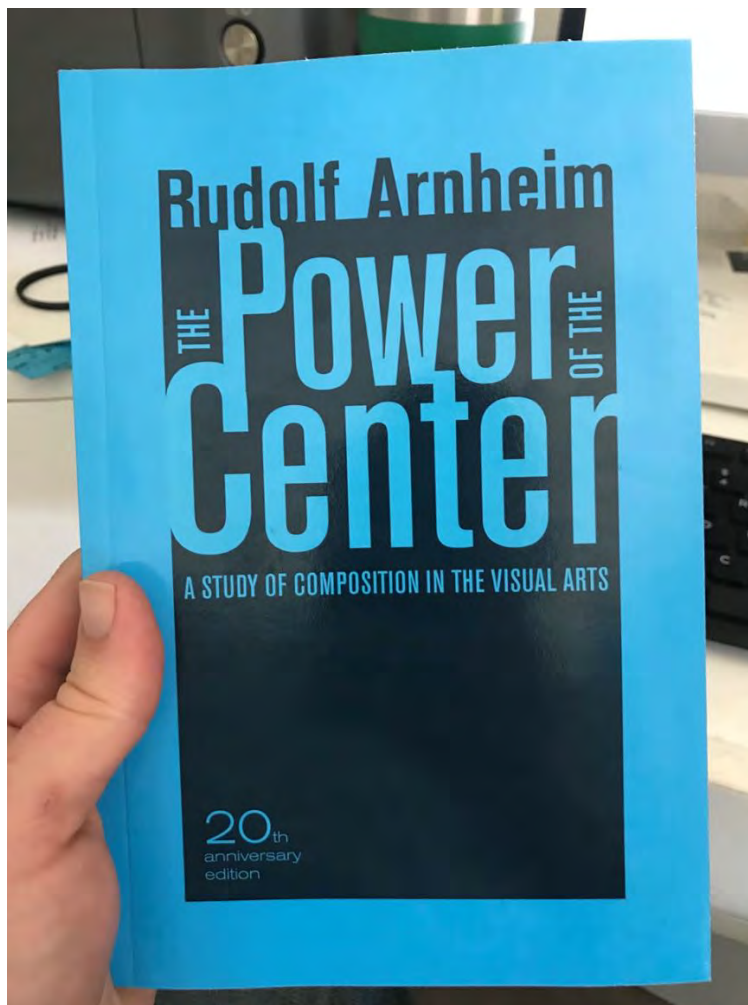


came through myself did not exactly resonate with me, therefore I did not entirely follow the thought patterns.

As far as the back cover is concerned, there lies the good snake, at the top! As well as two others of which their natures are good. Myself, and my sister's. I will leave it here. With this passage from, The Bible...

An epigraph in Greek, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16, KJV translation)"

The biblical passage and the caduceus is depicted in a medical context upon the printer's apparatus used by the Swiss Medical Printer, Johann Frobenius (1460-1527). He depicted the staff wrapped by two serpents with a dove perched atop of it. As a reminder, the depiction of the caduceus dates back to ancient Greece, at least.



Rudolf Arnheim's, "The Power of the Center"



FIGURE 81



FIGURE 82.  
Michelangelo, Crucifixion for Vittoria Colonna (detail).  
c. 1538–1541. British Museum, London.



## Notation 19:

### Scum Rigs: A Review

As a kid growing up in the grunge era of the mid 90's listening to music that echoed a helplessness and a thick guitar driven drum kicking-thumping want to overcome such vague depressive states as mania, melancholy, and a general down trodden mood, Justin Beachler's homage to the good ol' days that we never really escaped, "Scum Rigs" is a loaded double barrel (bong) buckshot of sociopolitical visuality to the dome! Yes, we all recall dire attempts at outbuilding the next guy's, or gal's, bong or homemade Pepsi-can-pipe all in an effort to escape taut home life and to build friendships with likeminded peers. And if you weren't building you were watching and supporting laughing the whole way. At play with cognition and base-level innovation we were, and that was the fun part, at least until stoned-stuck on a couch somewhere playing video games. And Beachler, highly aware, conjures all this and more in our current political climate in his new show at Haw Contemporary. There you will find not only relics of the past but mainstream dialogue with real world problems. (The midwestern states caught in an undertow of conservative laws against marijuana use.) In addition to all this, we must account for the title of "Scum Rigs" and question, who really is the scum being talked about?



Justin Beachler, Scum Rigs, 2016

## **Notation 20:**

### **Some Call it a Disaster**

Some of the darkest and strangely, best years of my life followed 9/11. I was in a new place, a city called Manhattan where I attended undergraduate and graduate school. The culture was immense. The city prior the attack, pulsing with energy and joy. That whole thing about a big fish in a small pond, well, reverse it and that was me. And I was living the best times I had had to that point. My youth was crescendoing and I was on top of it all and with it. There were parties and new friends, most of all, new friends. Ecstatic I was at my opportunity for succeeding, and I have. But, 9/11 happened then when I was at the top of it all in my life and in some ways, I also fell with them. The nightmares persisted, the buildings falling, the armed forces at each subway entrance and exit, the beautiful candlelight vigils across New York, and the bravery of my brother-in-law and sister coming to greet it all anew then, and Betsy. I remember it all, smoking out of third story windows at the School of Visual Arts with a beautiful, yet tragic sunset in the distance on those nights. And trying, as art students, to make something of beauty out of the tragedy of it all, which was difficult, but we managed it. Yes, we managed and it had changed all of us then, some innocence was lost and some was kindled among us students. So, we danced. And we danced. And we ventured into the mess, daily. And it was a mess. But with focus and resolve we did our best to create objects of desire that were beautiful, yet tragic. And we managed it. Yes, we did.



Damon Freed standing on the New Jersey City shoreline in 2000, by Chris Csajko



**Notation 21:**



Obstacle and Void (Cross): Yellow with Violet, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches

## Heaven Sent II

God cried out to them.  
Newman and Rothko kneeled down on both knees to him.  
Albers thanked Palermo in heaven —  
And I, well, I'm here still doing seven things at once, but I'm no dunce!  
This is where art, science, philosophy, and religion come to thank him!

And I do kindly and daily.  
In my pursuit of him whether it be in light blue or in navy!  
Whether it be in violet or yellow, I don't get through my days without a halo!

### Notation 22:



This piece by me is a statement piece, I cannot deny, especially preferring a whisper to a shout. But there are some things that can be said of it. Essentially, my aim was to deface an iconic Andy Warhol piece for the sake of ethical disagreement. In a recent piece created by Roger

Shimomura, he paints a Piet Mondrian hanging above a toilet, as a nude Japanese woman takes a bath, naked, exposed from the waist up, who is looking at the piece from a sitting position in the bath tub. The Mondrian above the toilet was enough to get me going alone in terms of the denunciation of art objects to the point of meaninglessness. But, the uncladded Japanese woman in the bath tub adds to the despicable taste of some people, not to mention making a statement about her (and the artist's roots) culture's acceptance of a Pop idealism, flimsy at best. Now, it makes me question why the first and perhaps greatest art movement, Abstract Expressionism, in this country, the U.S.A., hasn't been claimed by the Easterners to such a degree. Well, because it's likely easier not to.

Anyhow, the feelers of this great country, and those most steeped in depth of thought were in my opinion the Abstract Expressionists once upon a time in this great country or ours. But to deny their aesthetic, and to trash their roots in history as stemming from other greats such as Piet Mondrian, Kandinsky, and Malevich, one might be provoked otherwise.

Therefore, in my piece, represented is my rendition of Andy Warhol's famous Marilyn Monroe piece obscured from view by a "Gold X." The gold coloration of the x was created for its money reference, which, above all is what the Pops wagered in their success. Money, money, money. And empty Fame. So this painting represents me putting a stop to such kind of successes and to those whom uphold, as artists and people, such fame. Also, it represents, to me, the burden of success, meaningless success.

But, like Trump, we all need to be reminded, I suppose, of the pitfalls of such a thing from time to time. The ego gone out of control, the wealth of a nation, the frivolous activities of success wagered in these ways, and, above all, the demise of capitalistic enterprises gone bad. Bad, meaning bankrupt of moral goodness and positivity. At the heart of Pop aesthetics is an undeniably grand Sinicism and Pessimism in the potential of great art to elevate and to enlighten our cultures.

So, all in all I've said what I need to say. Yet, I'm left with this one last thing that is nagging in the back of my mind, my Monroe was painted freely with my brushes. Which might say something more about the human touch.



**Notation 23:**



*Apollo (photographed before completion of the painting), 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, Four Panels, 48 x 48 inches*

**Apollo**

The image of the confederate flag appeared to me one day like a thought while sitting outside behind my studio, except as many inspirations do, it came to me visually. It was horizontally

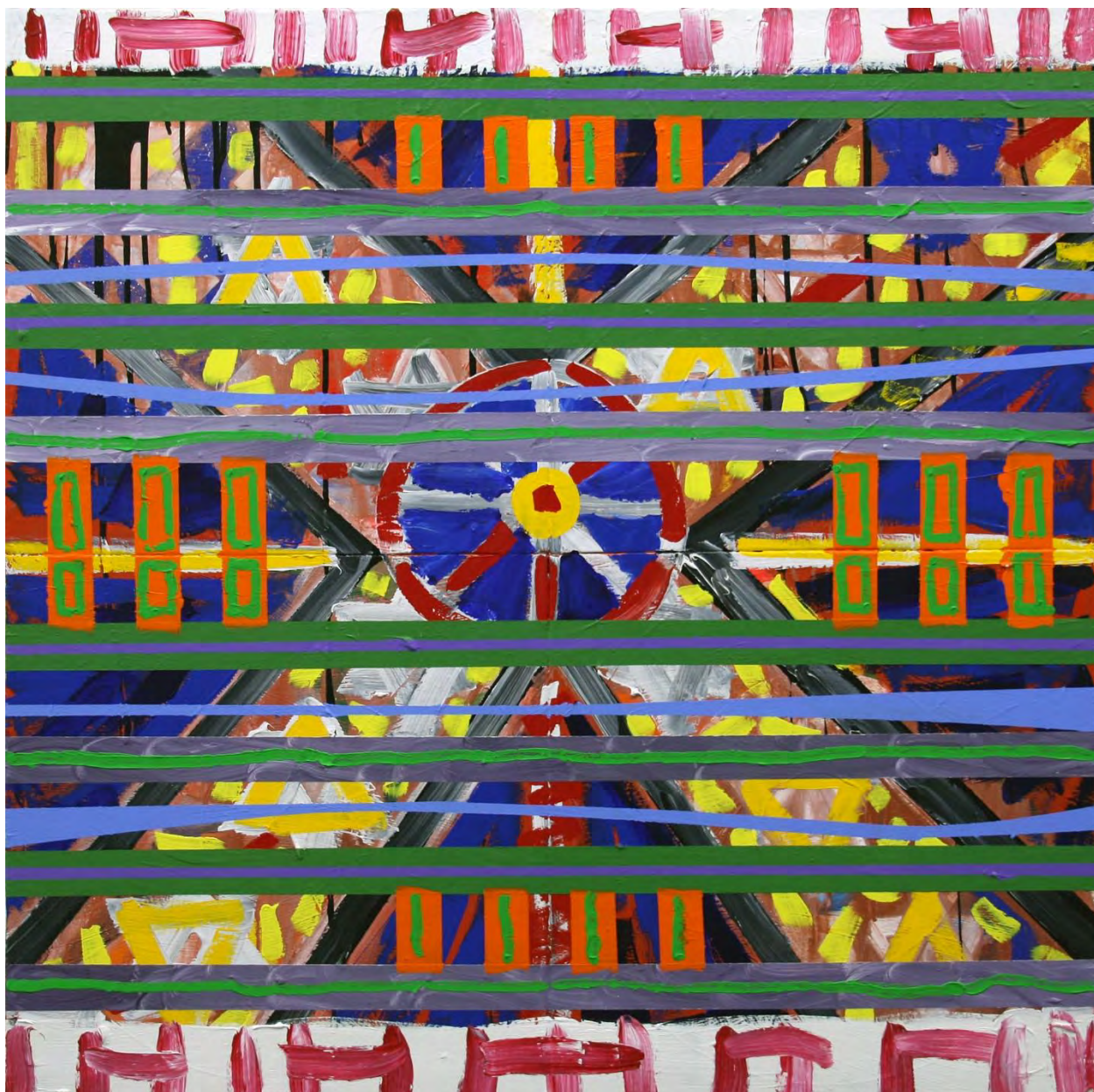
oriented in my vision, but, I didn't yet know what or how to make of it. So, I sat with the vision for a week or so. Then, after completion of a different painting it came to me what to do. At this time, I researched the flag, its form, and its implications. Referring to an older piece of mine made while I was in college, I had the thought to reintroduce the drip technique. My previous adventures into dripping with the pieces I made in college were fun to make and one incorporated the American Flag behind drips and was entitled, "Buried Flag."

I attempted the same effect here, with this painting, but my memory did not serve me as well as I would have liked, thus, I applied the copper paint, the same color and paint I had used on the older piece, but, without using retarder to thin and to prolong the drying time as I did in the older days. So, I was left with quite the mess to deal with, so I worked quickly and hard at getting the paint to run – to little avail. Note, this dripping and running of the paint was supposed to be most obvious in the flag layer, beneath the black drips. Since I couldn't get it to work how I wanted it to I began to wipe the "Confederate Battle Flag" image clear of the copper paint by using paper towels which had a rough smudging effect. Once I had asserted the image to my liking, to a similar nature as the flag, I let it sit for a while just looking at it and the black drips then came to mind. I liked the association of race to both the flag and its possible injustices to people, which I already knew was the content I would be dealing with in a sensitive manner, no matter how crudely it is depicted here. So, once the painting had spoken to me, the image of the worn flag that is, I applied what, to me, is the bleeding of injustices done to African American blacks during the Civil War.

I struggled with the title, originally, I wanted to title it, "Buried Flag #2." Then, "True Colors," came to mind. Then, an all-encompassing title of, "Battle Torn (Buried Flag #2, True Colors Showing)" came to mind. But, once I sat outside and decided I was going to post its image to social media and to Facebook, I was inspired to call it, just, Apollo! Now, I like the title, but I can't say I totally understand it other than Apollo represents to some, order in the universe. So, naming it Apollo, to me, is like calling for more order in our universe and to our current, crazy times.

But it remains somewhat ambiguous to me as a title, and I think that's a good thing with this rather pointed, divisive even, image of a battle flag and the associative black dripping. The title came to me while sitting outback in a similar way as the image for the flag in the painting did, so, I knew then that the title of Apollo, was appropriate. I hope you enjoy its qualities of being. I think it's a good painting.





*Apollo, (After Completion of the Painting)* 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, Four Panels, 48 x 48 inches

#### **Notation 24:**

#### **The Majesty of Nature**

There are some things I can say about this series. Nothing feels better to me than finally being able to present to you two nonobjective paintings with nature in them. For a very long time I have worked at them, for years really, to be able to arrive at something not obvious, not like a slap in your face, but something as subtle and evocative in its orientation as nature can be. The

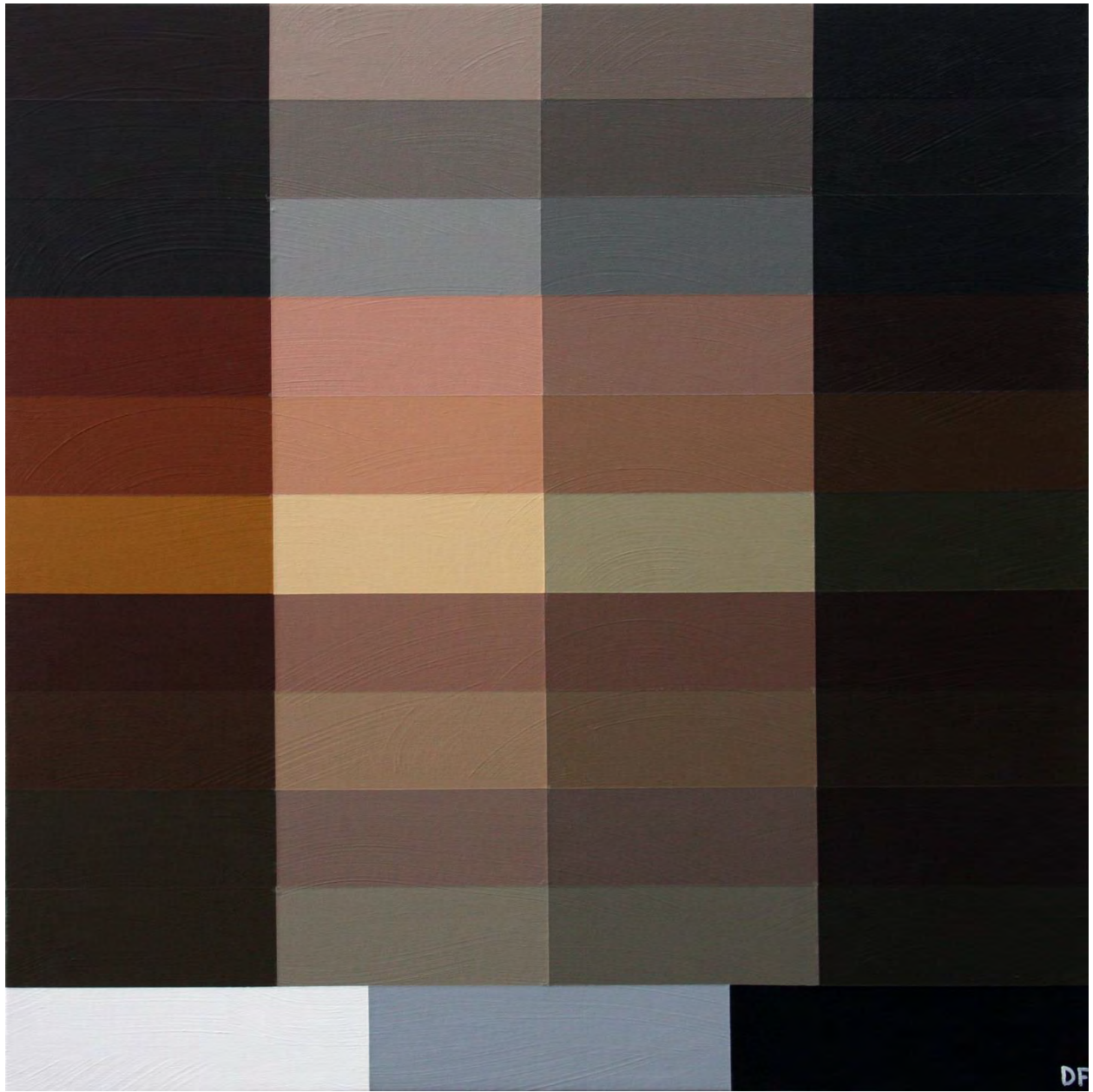
paintings are of nature. What I mean is the palette consists of pigments derived directly from the earth. It is delightful to finally be able to speak about the work in a direct way corresponding with nature. My work has always been about nature in the way that we are a part of nature as human beings. But, my color has never been so quietly natural and expressive of that part of nature which is the very rock and soil we walk upon.

There is a sublime feeling to these paintings. A basic tranquility and equilibrium found in nature on a rainy day, or within the clear night, a calm evening, within a spring or autumn morning. A fundamental wisdom and feeling of tranquil solitude weeps out of the color, yet, the grid echoes the many people whom reside upon the roads, paths, and grid networks within our vast country.



Neutral Browns with White, Grey, and Black #1, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 36 x 36 inches





Neutral Browns with White, Grey, and Black #2, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 36 x 36 inches

## Recent Poems



## **A Snake and a Saint**

I have been a snake in the grass  
I went there for understanding  
But most of all I have been a pain in the ass  
To those who did not take the time to understand me

I have been a saint on higher ground  
To others who have been around me  
But I have gone underground  
To rid their darkness that surrounds me

### **#1**

The too fragile deserve  
The too responsive deserve  
The strong know this  
The weak do not

### **#2**

When the time comes  
We will know  
But we do not  
So, we wait

### **#3**

In some ways you know how  
In some ways you don't  
But always there is a way  
Whether it is black and white or in shades of grey

### **#4**

Art is all of it at once  
A little that way and all around  
A tiny bug made a sound  
Holy cow I am found!

**#5**

Justice is but a thing  
Nothing but a diamond ring  
All I do is make a ring  
Around and around I go

**#6**

I walk the line with life  
But justice is in peace and strife  
So galivanting I go  
To and fro

**#7**

The end is the end some say  
And I know not what comes after  
Although, I once imagined the final chapter  
The cycle slowing and an erudition of wisdom and light!

**#8**

Infinity is but the stars  
Or the moon tonight above the cars  
How would I know why stigmata was felt?  
My right hand pierced by a svelte.

**#9**

Science, Art, and Religion  
Twonism can endure one more pretension  
For Philosophy sprung up from the Academician  
And that is why I am a magician!

**#10**

Pure is the light in the studio  
Pure as the white finding snow  
Pure as the lights do glow  
Pure, yes pure, as go the go goes

**#11**

A dance goes around and round  
As does the prance of sounds  
As does the sound of bedtime  
So, go to bed you thieves and fools!  
Before the day runs out!

**#12**

Those who are white and black in marriage don't attack  
For a blend is what they are  
So, grey is such a shining star  
The only star you see in the dead of night and in the daytime

**#13**

If luck be a lady  
Then call me down on my luck  
If luck be a fickle man  
Then filled with luck I am

**#14**

Writing about poor snow for the wealthy  
Is not art either, but new snow for leaves  
Is about the art we see,  
And we call it beauty

**#15**

Men and women and things  
Insects and birds and rings  
Who tames the man who sings  
To a lady or bird or man

**#16**

Ice cold isn't cool enough  
Breezy in the summertime is just right  
A boy and his Man Dad keeping it tight  
Learning to paint while the music is on

**#17**

I miss her and her again  
A society plate fresh from the pin  
A diner plate around ten  
And the music to get us there

**#18**

The contemporaneity of life  
The traditions of the past  
Somewhere in between  
Coming in both first and in last

**#19**

Most of the time I keep up  
Life moves fast until that final cup is offered  
And let it be pure and clean and in copper  
Not fettered and not sour, in my final hour

**#20**

Some pursue the mind  
Some pursue the heart  
Some think something of the other  
While making their art.

**#21**

She comes and she goes like a ghost in the night  
But fear is far from us  
So I take her in  
And I blow her out  
And write about her

**#22**

The clock goes around  
The clock struck 12:30am  
The bell that strikes at 1 o'clock  
Will carry me through the morning.

### **#23**

A twelve by twelve could be a good thing  
Depending on which way the wind blows  
6 little paintings going up and down  
Small life of an artist is not dictated by money  
But by morals

### **#24**

Should I be losing my mind  
And, in a hole on the path  
Without the abilities to elevate my own mind  
Perhaps the breeze will bring happiness for a time

### **#25**

Failures have been plentiful in my life  
Failures in the mist and strife  
The paint is in acrylic now  
It gets as dark as it did get light

### **#26**

I go down into oblivion  
But this I handle with grace  
Just like the look on your face  
When she calmly took my plate

### **#27**

Up and down we go like this  
Until the snow is melted in the Springtime  
To and fro we bend like this  
Until the rocky path is bending too

### **#28**

Thoughts of losing one's mind come and go silently in the night  
Yet, when one wakes  
There is clarity in sight  
Thus, with strength I walk in the light!

**#29**

Fate might be fair  
But what of cherishing the air more than others  
Is it even possible in this lifetime?  
I don't know.

**#30**

The weight of days upon my chest  
It's in my lungs, it's in my breast  
Who am I to question why?  
Except for the fact that I could die.

**#31**

The sublime horizon over winter's crest  
Like a painting of the sky looking west  
Tumbling flakes falling to the ground  
Like the seasons year after year turning around

**#32**

Reaching my age in numbers now  
Catching my youth somehow  
Like a healthy buck in the snow  
Attending to what he knows

**#33**

The beauty of my grey hair  
In the reflection of a young girl's stare  
She makes a comment on my age  
I thank her kindly and tip a wage

**#34**

Confusion sits kindly on a shelf  
But there is beauty in the help  
For all my days I walk a straight line  
I've had a dozen more that did unwind



**#35**

It was a good year to me  
I liked it because I was youthful and strong  
Four years later my muscles are gone  
But my brain is large  
And strong

**#36**

Some are too young  
Some art is exciting  
Some art is dry to the bone  
What is your tone?

**#37**

The confusion of days  
Is but a beauty  
We can't hide from

**#38**

The grand repeater of days  
Is it possible, no it's not  
The grand impossible plot  
Is that life is impossible  
Because it's not

**#39**

But I wonder what could go right  
If one manufactured light  
If all one did was stare and gaze  
Into the history of days

**#40**

But science is not my plot  
For art is the heart or more  
And science is helpful, yes  
But science is a mess

**#41**

It leaves an imprint large as days  
Sometimes small as a gaze  
But I tell you, I've not seen a haze  
Except in the aftermath of dayz

**#42**

A darkened hue  
A vision too far off to see  
Stick with the present frame?  
If you want to be tame!

**#43**

Competition at its root suits my psyche  
But only because there was so much behind me  
Now I like a calm and smooth road  
One that doesn't rock my boat!

**#44**

Let the playoffs begin  
And begin again  
For if they were to end  
Man just might end also

**#45**

But I've written it before and I'll say it again  
For them to end it would take a miraculous loving way  
Unity might then save the day  
And no man would be enslaved

**#46**

Power is nonsense over another  
God knows this  
He is all knowing  
But he is also all learning

**#47**

Nature and God  
What can I say?  
They are together in the sod and alone in the hay.

**#48**

The lightest sound is all I can hear  
It goes something like merry cheer  
But a wince is all you heard  
When you suggested I was the turd

**#49**

Guile is immense  
But honesty persists  
And secures the boy  
For a lifelong journey

**#50**

Writing is like this:  
Sometimes you have it,  
And sometimes you don't.  
Most of the time,  
I have it.

**#51**

At times I write like this:  
  
When quietude is the only thing  
Around, I make a sound to drown out the  
Quietude. Halleluiah.

**#52**

Be good, as you go to the store  
To get your things that you need.  
Otherwise, you might bring them pain.

**#53**

At the grocery store,  
Sometimes I have to go to the very back,  
Where it is quiet to get alone for perspective.  
As the volunteers go motoring by.

**#54**

As you pass on your words to others,  
Try not to odorize the air with things like  
Mouthfuls of shit.

**#55**

So many contradictions nothingness resumes.

**#56**

Everything is satisfied  
Even the ten thousand things can rest  
Gone fishing after work.

**#57**

In all the world's fairs  
I stare at one page infinitely  
It is my own

**#58**

Knowledge is this way  
You live, you live  
That's it

**#59**

Transition  
What to say about it?  
Nothing

**#60**

I watched a movie once  
The lead actor survived the jungle  
Eat, shit, scratch where it itches  
Drink water  
You will survive

**#61**

Convincing myself  
To live another day  
Dew on the spring grass!

**#62**

In the morning  
Tearing the parchment  
As the priest folds his linens

**#63**

Two days ago  
Three lines ago  
Four hours gone

**#64**

Today:  
A sunshine wind  
Kicked me in the ass!

**#65**

Who said Poplar was a hardwood?  
Have they touched my soul?  
My spirit.

**#66**

In the autumn I can see forever,  
But everything tends that way,  
To Die.

**#67**

Winter in a shoe sole,  
Calibrated to fit  
My penis!

**#68**

Intimacy –  
As limp as a milkfish,  
In my belly.

**#69**

Good day,  
The sale of a painting,  
Let the fainting begin.

**#70**

Two more poems  
No more fuel  
An appetite of steel

**#71**

One more poem  
An appetite for meal worms  
In this jungle!

**#72**

Last one I do now,  
5, 7, 5: A way to be  
You agree with me?

### **The Spider and the Bat**

There once was a spider and there once was a bat!  
Neither could bite the other and that was that.  
Each had a bite, fierce and strong –

But when one was right,



The other was wrong.

So, the story goes like this...

One, two, and three,  
No need for biting when the other one agrees.  
Four, five, and six,  
The spider and the bat each got their kicks!

And that was that!

## **God**

I am not him, but I am him,  
He is not me... I am myself.  
Now, innocently I go forward now.  
As have so many before!  
It is our job to see!  
And with it, the greyness of being rises...!

## **Twonism**

Take aim, people

Get it all out

The fire is coming

The spiral is not

The warmth of genealogy is here

The gravity of bones

Isn't it all so queer

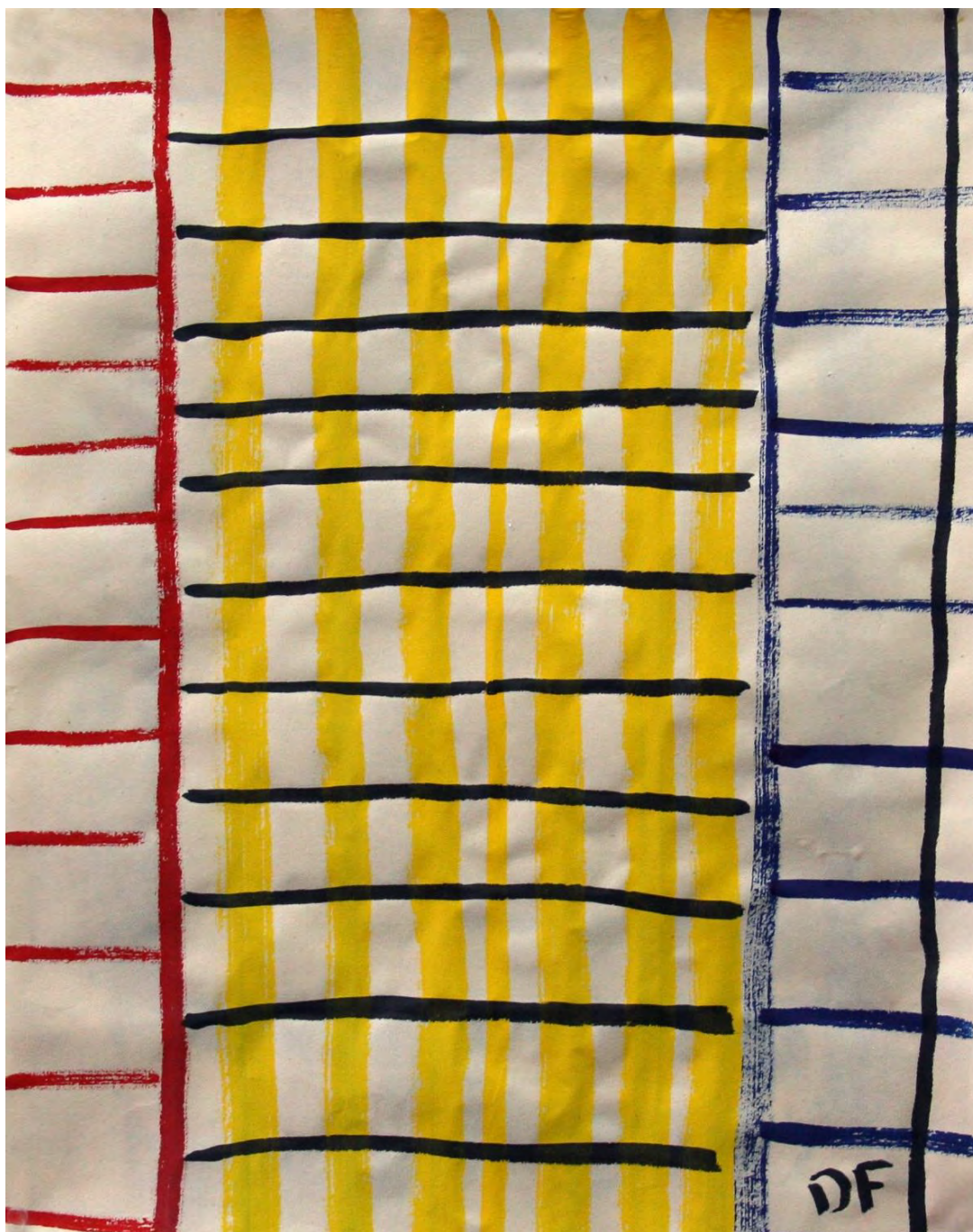
Living on stones

The hope is escaping

In and out of front doors

The anger is gaping  
The mouths of the poor  
And, in this time of loss  
The space has collapsed  
Time is for naught  
And where is He at?  
And now you All get to see,  
What I had nearly forgotten!  
The time to be,  
The rotten fruit.  
The end of the line,  
Death in a suit!  
What's it to you,  
And what's it to be,  
When all is for naught,  
At the end of a key!

## **Works on Paper**

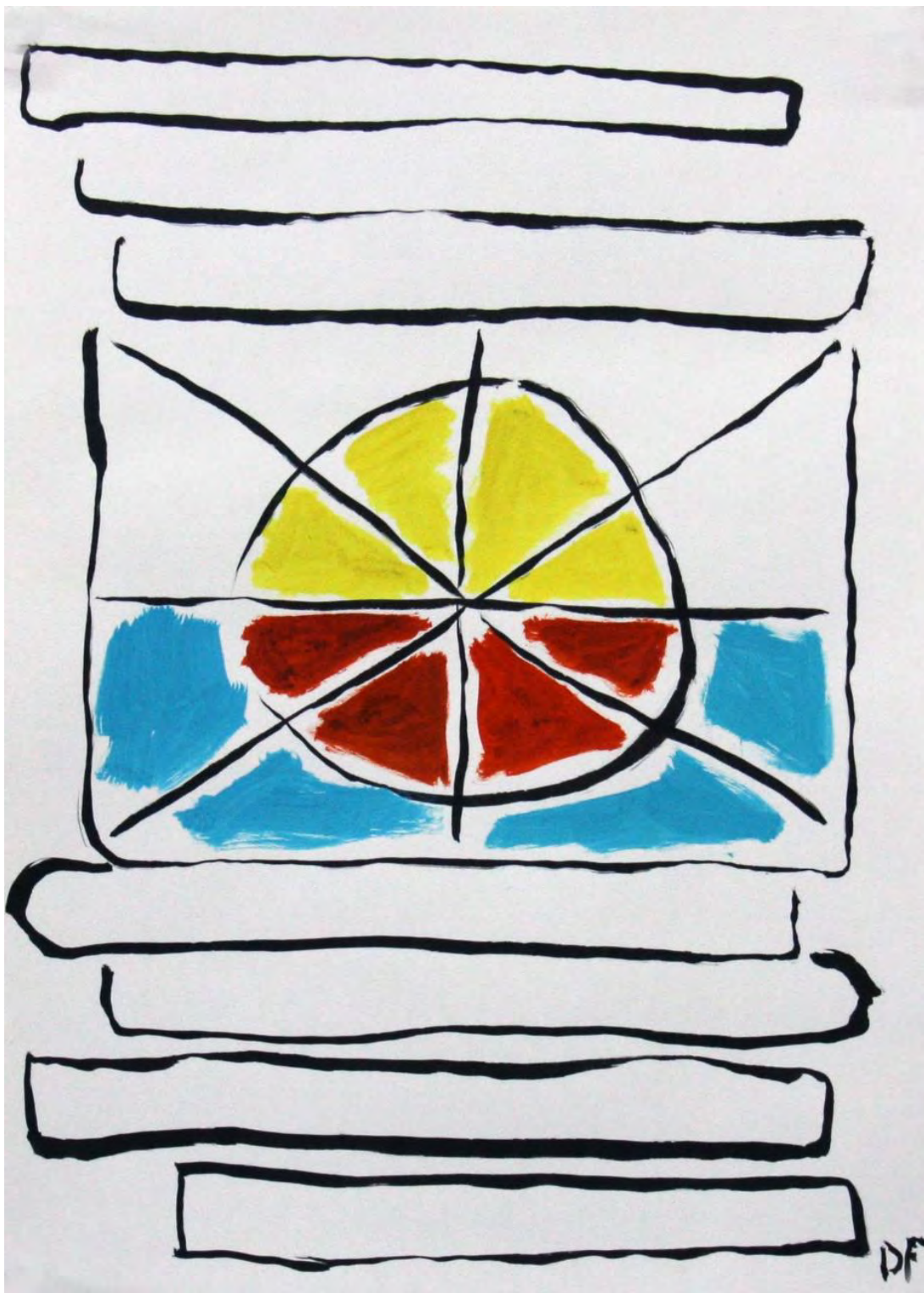


Untitled #49, 2017, Shellac Ink on Rice Paper, 20 ½ x 16 ½ inches



Untitled #48, 2017, Shellac Ink on Rice Paper, 20 ½ x 16 ½ inches





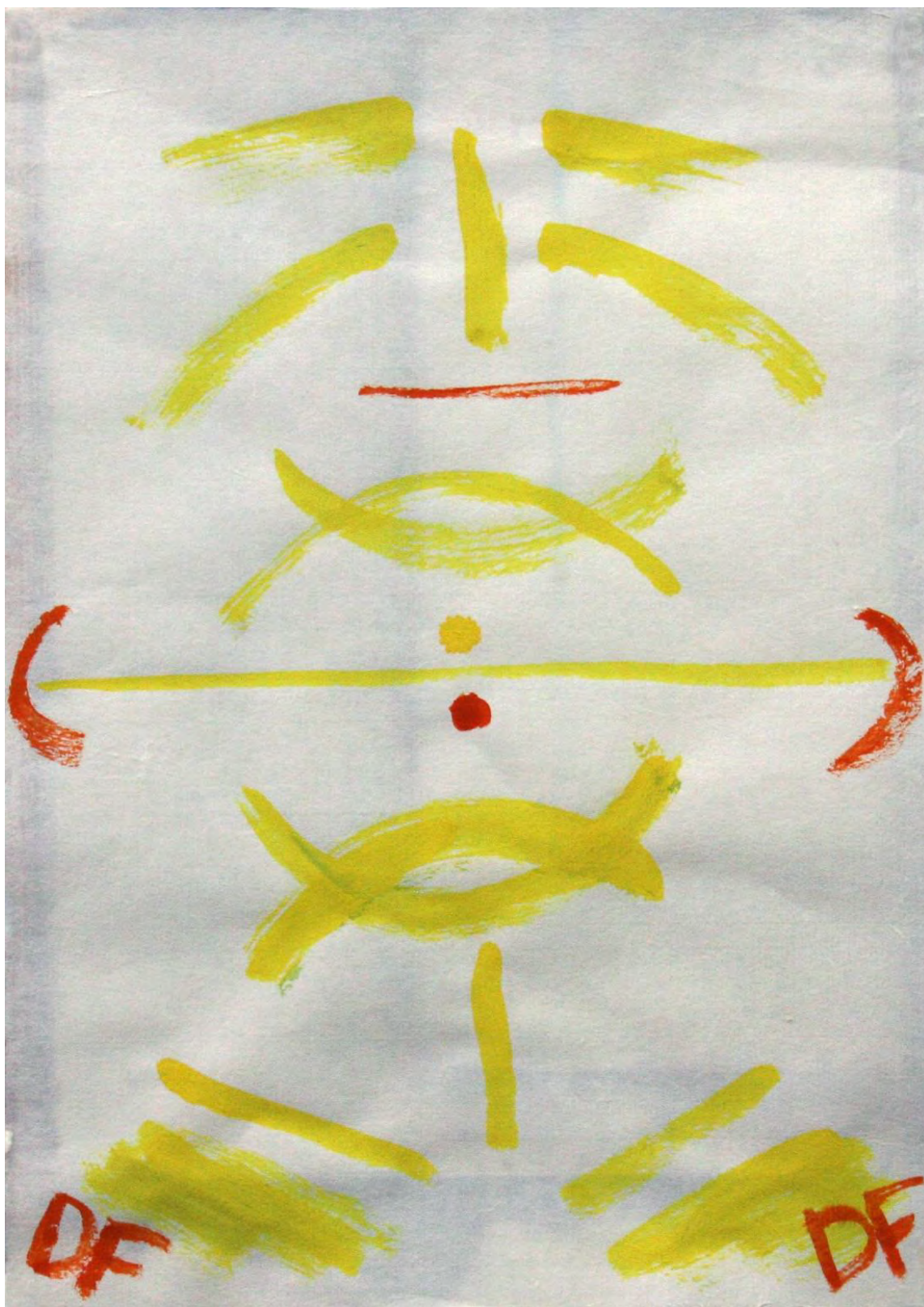
Untitled #47, 2017, Shellac Ink on Paper, 14 ¼ 10 ¼ inches





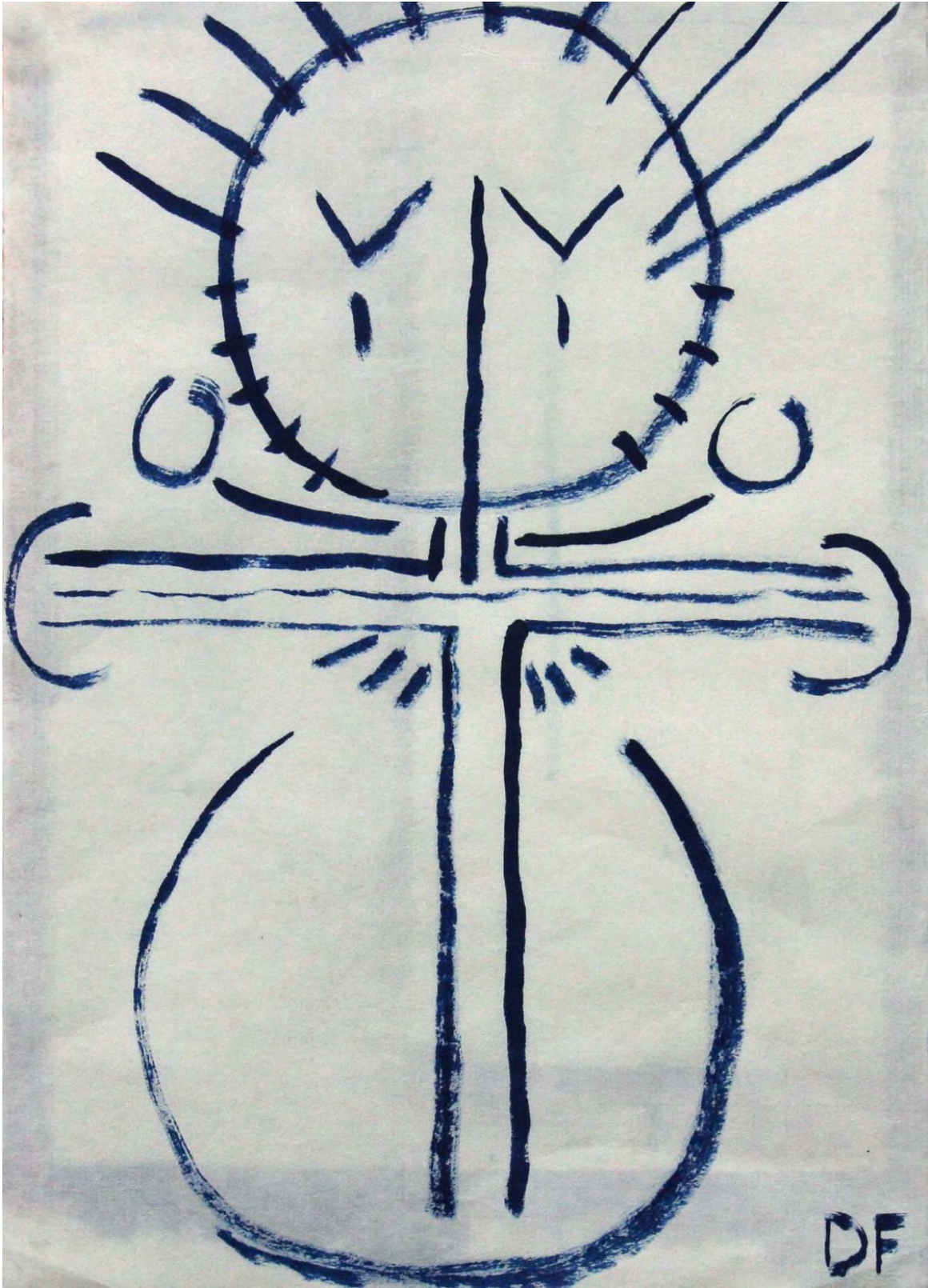
Untitled #46, 2017, Shellac Ink on Rice Paper, 17 x 12 ¼ inches





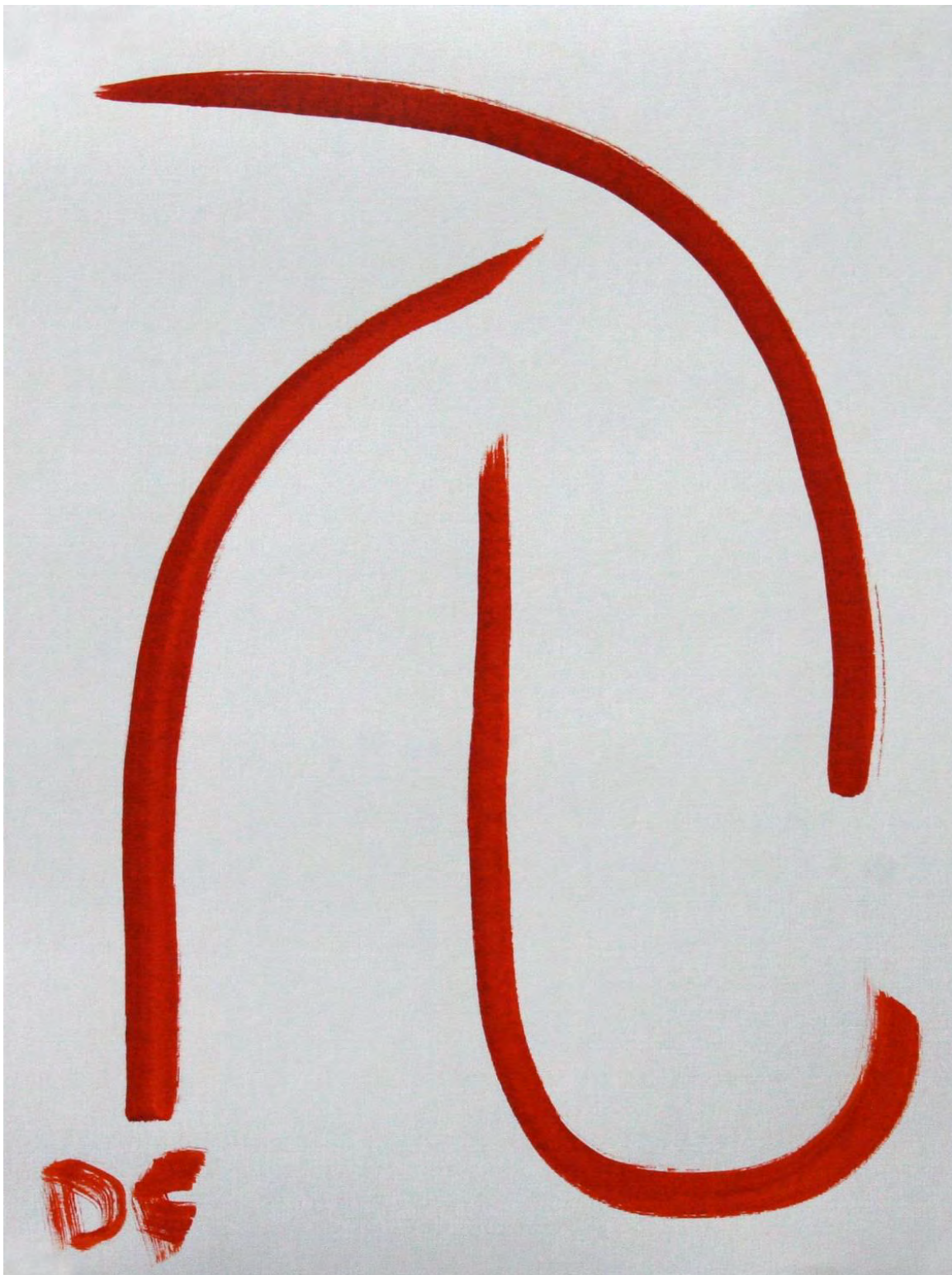
Untitled #45, 2017, Shellac Ink on Rice Paper, 17 x 12 ¼ inches





Untitled #44, 2017, Shellac Ink on Rice Paper, 17 x 12 ¼ inches



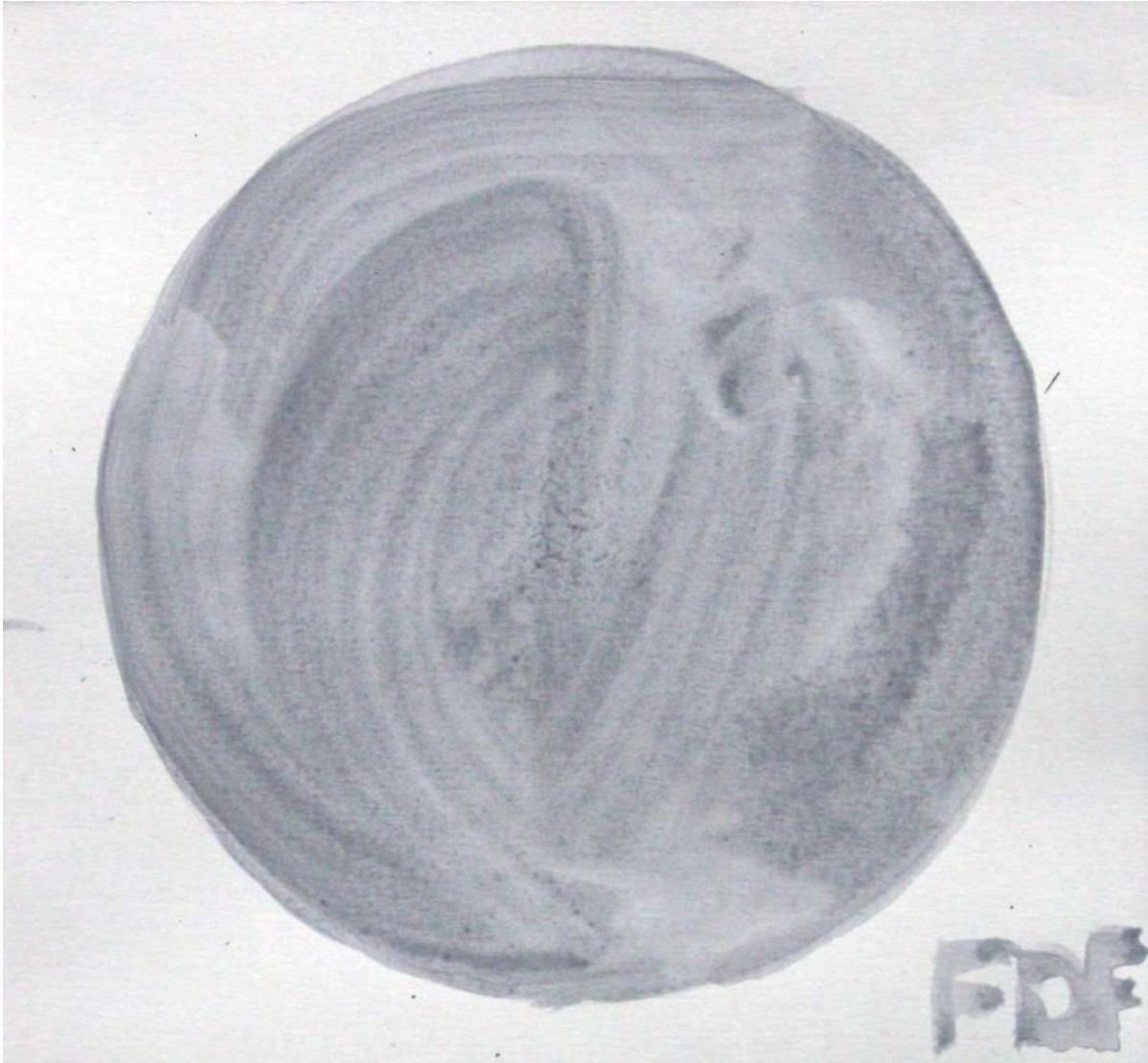


Balance, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 ½ inches



Wisdom, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 ½ inches





Grey Circle, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 10 ¼ x 11 inches





Grey Triangle, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 15 x 11 inches



Dead Unicorn, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 15 x 11 inches





Genius, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 15 x 11 inches

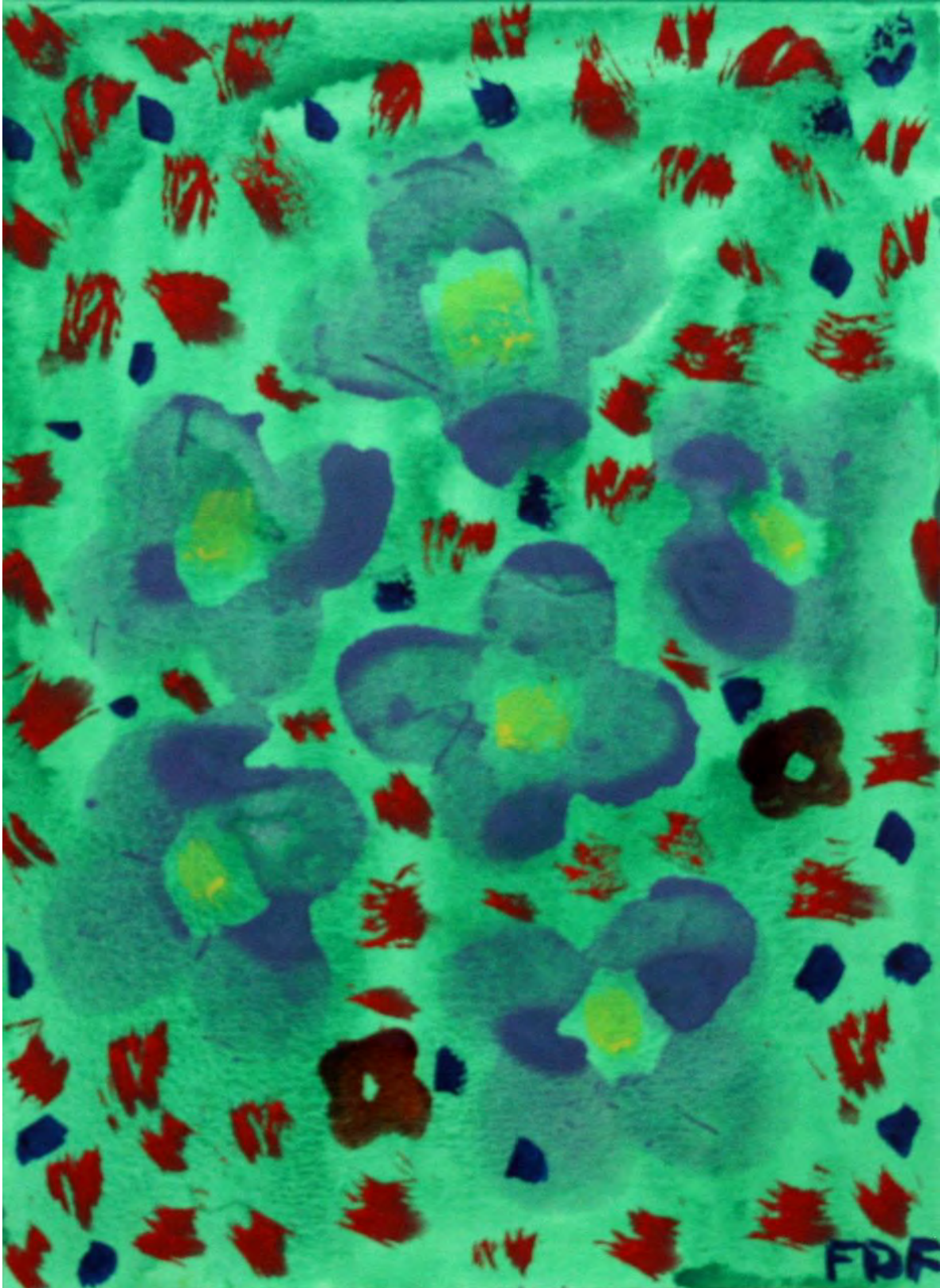


Arrogance and Modesty, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 15 x 11 inches





Hollow Cross, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 15 x 11 inches



Beauty, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 15 x 11 inches





La Grande Chartreuse, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 15 x 11 inches

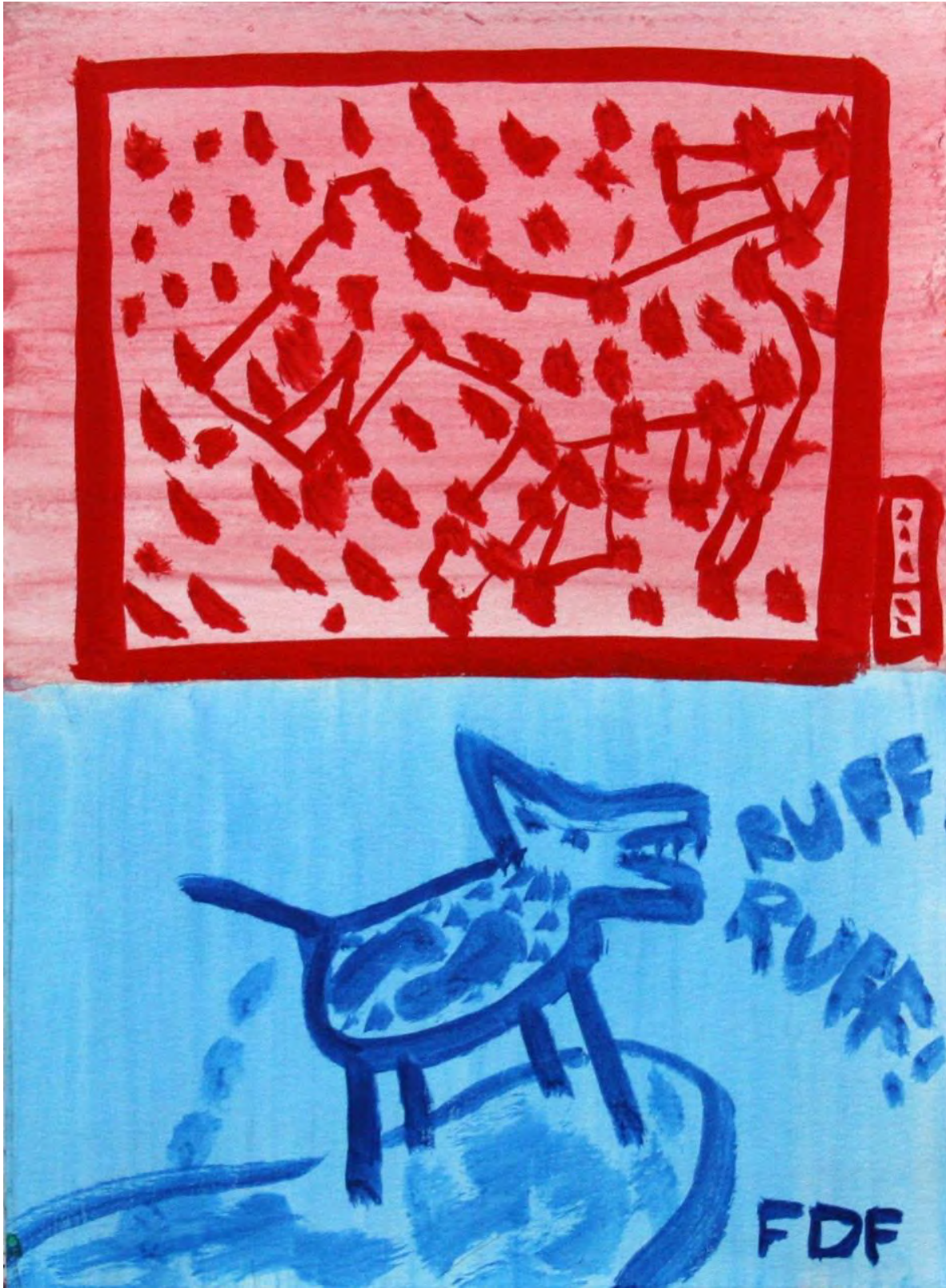


#4, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 15 x 11 inches





The Good Snake, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 15 x 11 inches



Boy Dog – Girl Dog, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 15 x 11 inches





Myself, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 15 x 11 inches



Daytime, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 15 x 11 inches



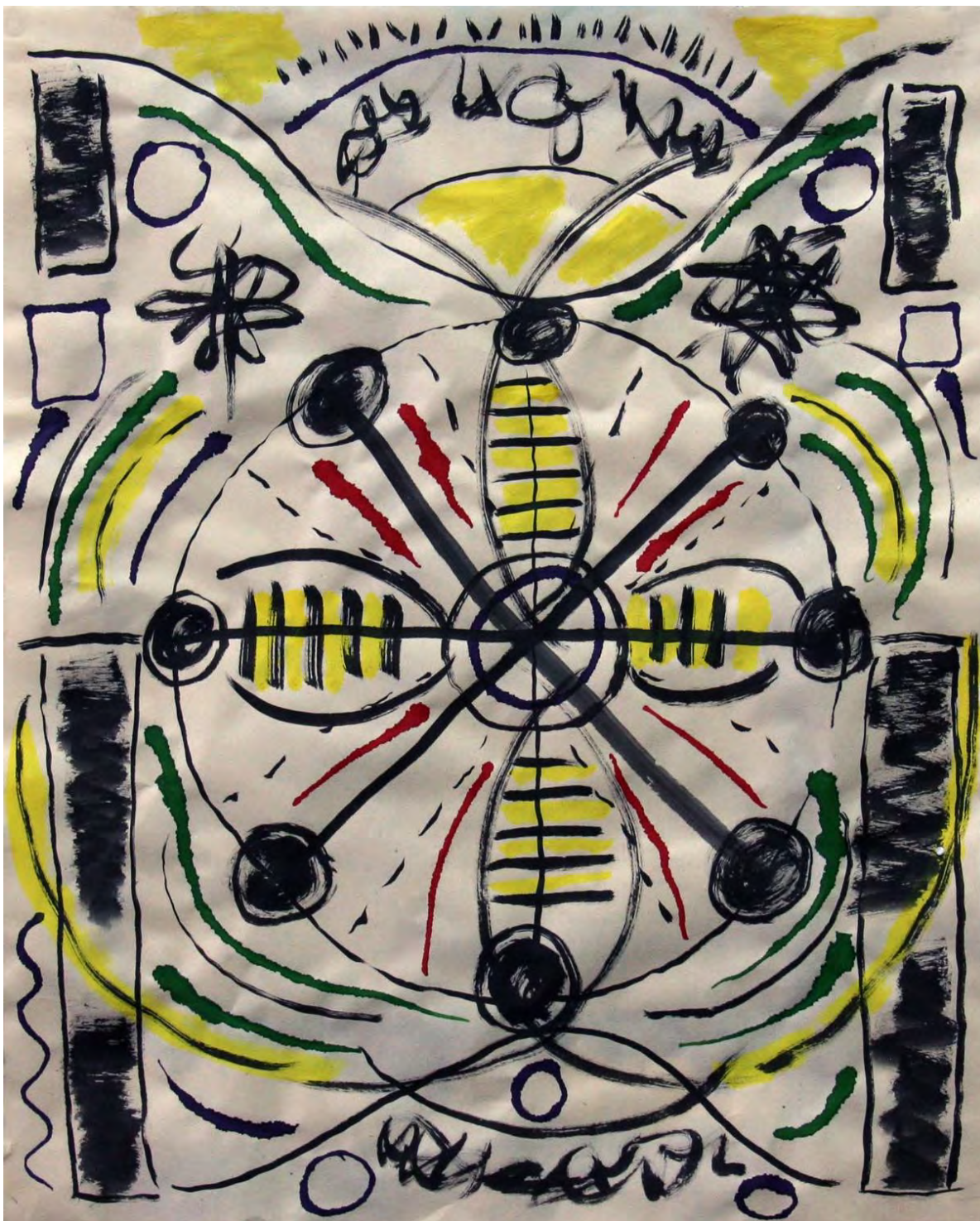


Strength, 2018, Oil and Cold Wax on Paper, 15 x 11 inches



Untitled #51, 2018, Shellac Ink on Rice Paper, 20 ½ x 16 ½ inches





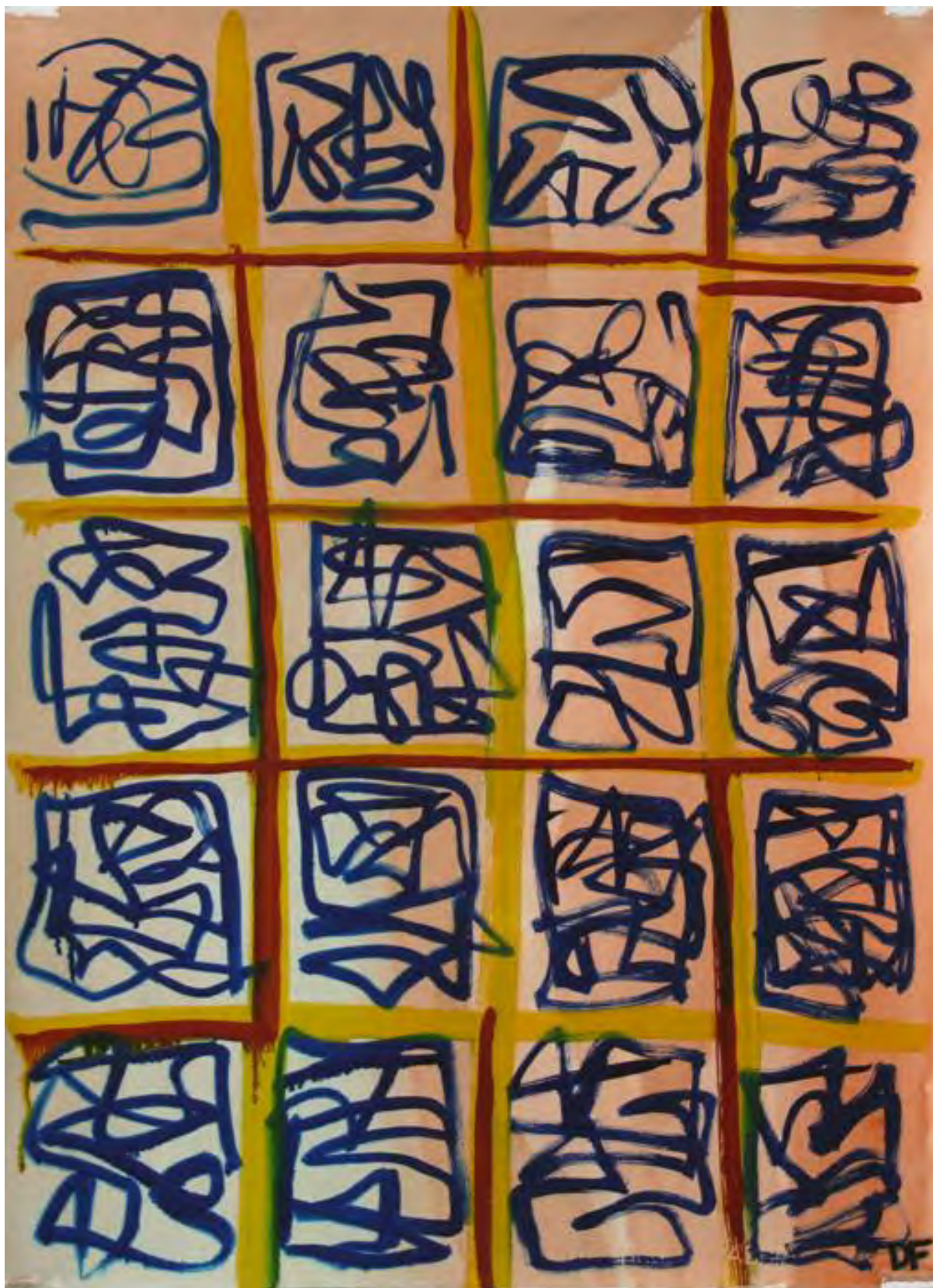
Untitled #50, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 20 ½ x 16 ½ inches





Utterance 1, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches





Utterance 2, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches





Utterance 3, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches





Utterance 4, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches





Utterance 5, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches





Utterance 6, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches





Utterance 7, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches





Utterance 8, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches



Utterance 9, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches



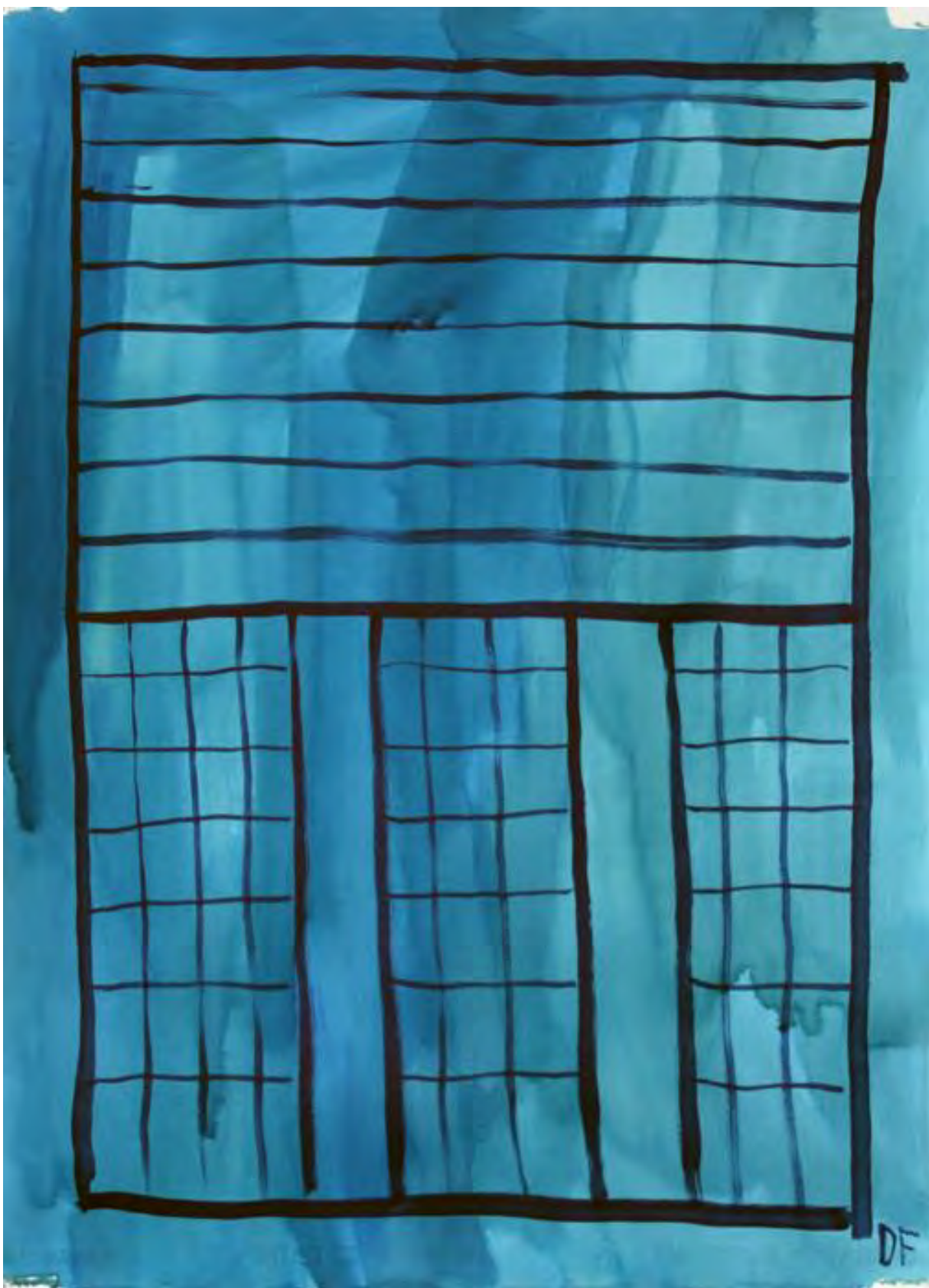


Utterance 10, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches



Utterance 11, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches





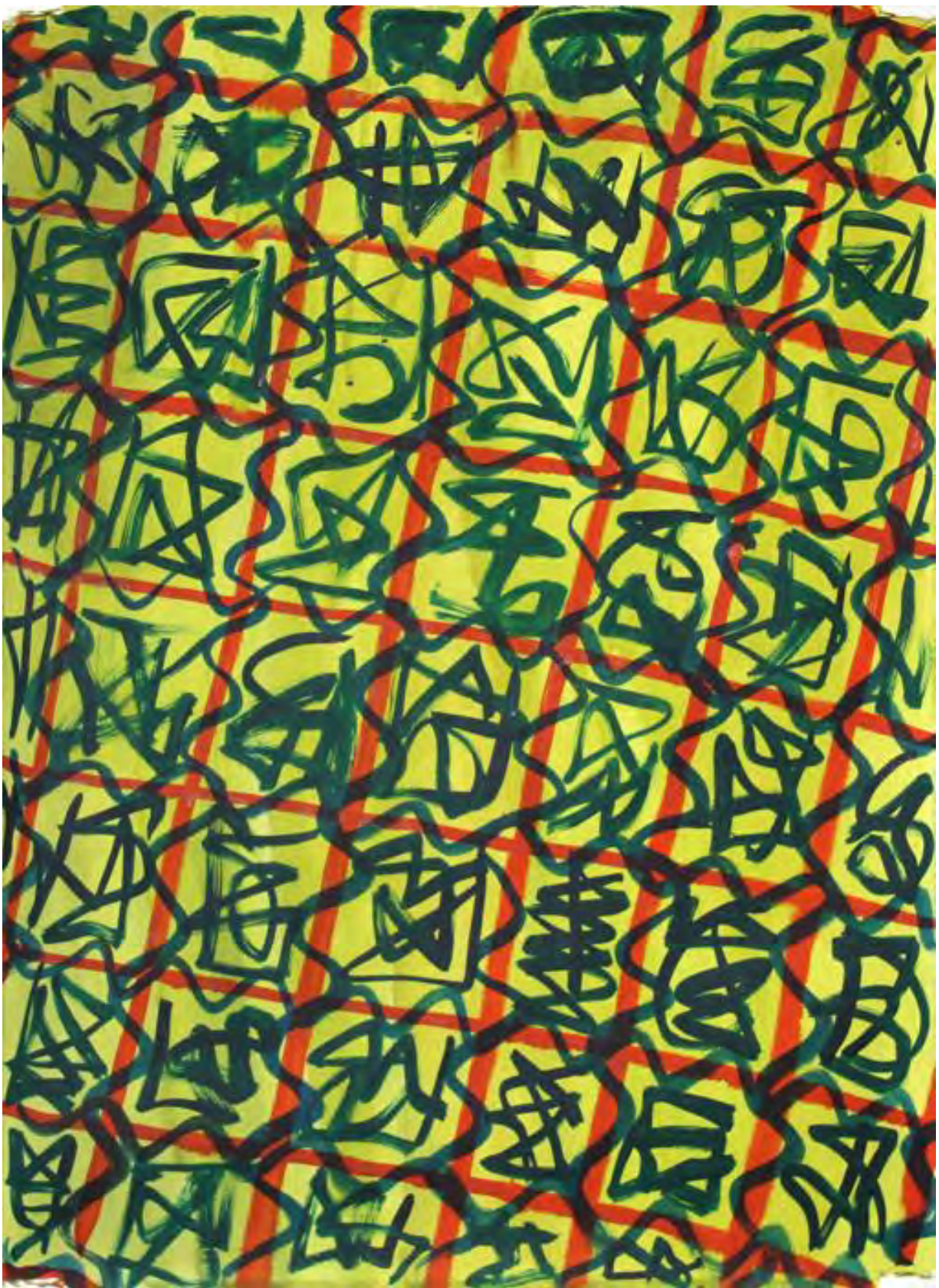
Utterance 12, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches



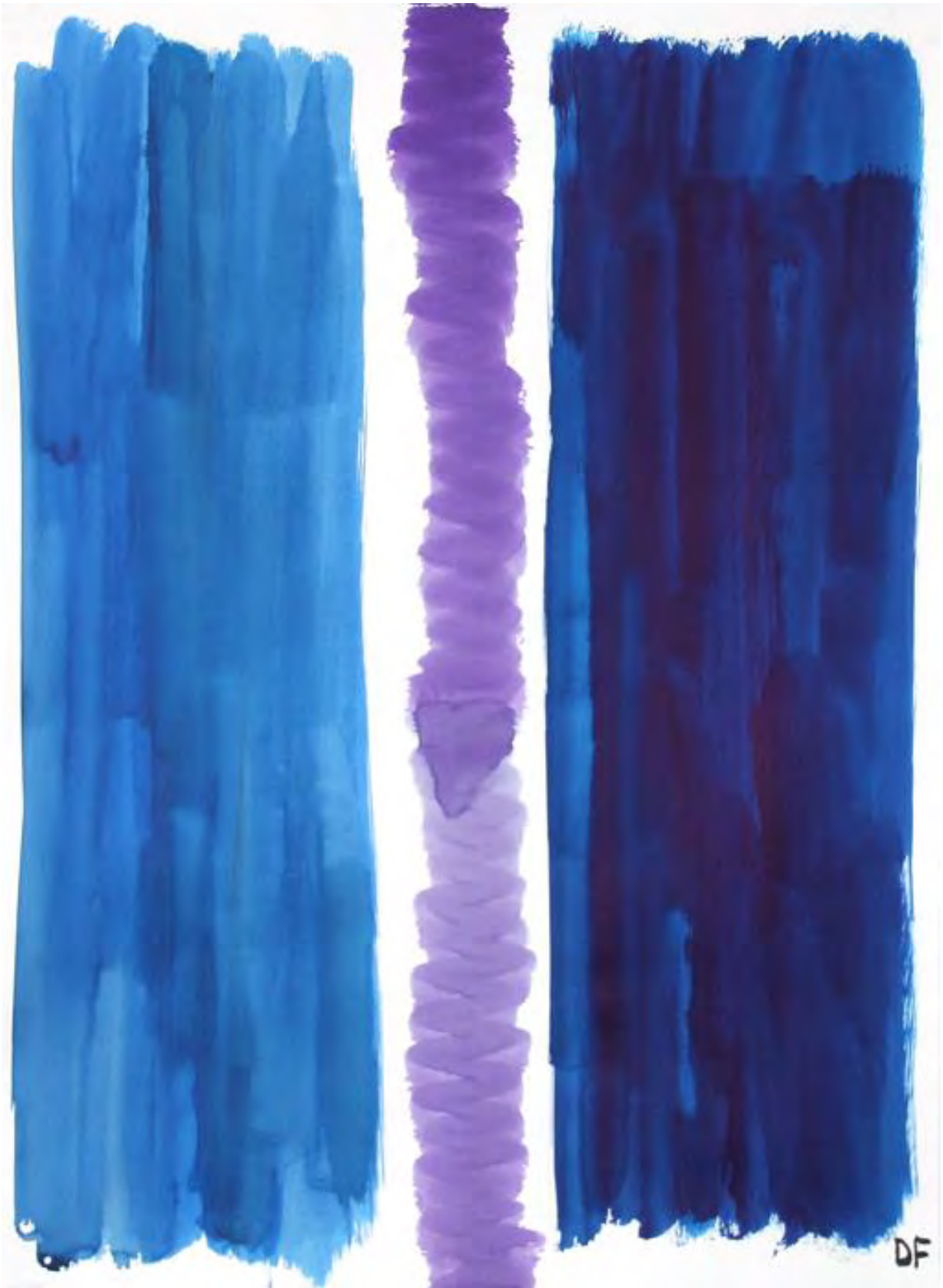


Utterance 13, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches





Utterance 14, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches



Utterance 15, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches





Utterance 16, 2018, Shellac Ink on Paper, 30 x 22 inches

## **Conclusion –**

I think this book is a good venture into my thoughts about art and a brief overview of the nature of my poems as well. I would like to thank all of my readers and viewers to this point of living. Thank you!



## **Exhibitions –**

### **Solo Exhibitions**

2023 Damon Freed: Obstacle & Void—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis (catalogue with essay)  
2022 Damon Freed: Sedalia—City Hall Municipal Building, Sedalia  
2022 Damon Freed: Town and Country—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis  
2020 Damon Freed: Structure and Void—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis (catalogue with essay)  
2019 Damon Freed: Paper Landscapes—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis  
2019 Damon Freed: Piss & Vinegar—Hayden Liberty Center Association for the Arts, Sedalia (catalogue with essays by Dennis Helsel and Mathew Clouse, and a poem by Damon Freed)  
2018 Damon Freed: The Correspondence of Color—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis (catalogue with essays)  
2017 Damon Freed: Landscapes—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis (catalogue with essay by Dennis Helsel)  
2015 Damon Freed: Obstacle and Void—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis (catalogue with essay by Tanya Hartman)  
2014 Damon Freed: Four Point Perspective—Daum Museum of Contemporary Art, Sedalia  
2012 Damon Freed: En Plein Air—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis (catalogue with essay by Kara Gordon and poems by Damon Freed)  
2012 Damon Freed: Grid Games—Three Rivers Community College, Poplar Bluff  
2012 Damon Freed: Cadence—Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City  
2011 Damon Freed: Life Saver—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis (catalogue with essay by Kara Gordon and poems by Damon Freed)  
2009 Damon Freed: Calm, Cool, Coherent—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis (catalogue with essay by Nancy Weant and studio notes by Damon Freed)

### **Group Exhibitions**

2022 Among Friends\_2022—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis, Missouri  
2020 Overview\_2020—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis, Missouri  
2019 Pairings: Encounters With The Collection—Daum Museum of Contemporary Art, Sedalia, Missouri  
2018 Overview\_2018—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis  
2017 Summer Invitational—Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City  
2016 From All The Borders of Itself—Park University, Kansas City  
2016 Late Summer Exhibit—Sager Braudis Gallery, Columbia  
2016 Summer Invitational—Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City  
2016 UCM Faculty Exhibition—Gallery of Art and Design, Warrensburg  
2015 In Good Company—Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City  
2015 UCM Faculty Exhibition—Gallery of Art and Design, Warrensburg  
2014 Paperworks—Liberty Center Loft Gallery, Sedalia  
2014 UCM Faculty Exhibition—Gallery of Art and Design, Warrensburg  
2013 Summer Invitational—Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City

2013 UCM Faculty Exhibition—Gallery of Art and Design, Warrensburg  
2012 Blue, White, and Red—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis  
2012 December Group Show—Liberty Center Loft Gallery, Sedalia  
2012 October Group Show—Liberty Center Loft Gallery, Sedalia  
2012 UCM Faculty Exhibition—Gallery of Art and Design, Warrensburg  
2011 UCM Faculty Exhibition—Gallery of Art and Design, Warrensburg  
2010 Project Room Overview—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis  
2010 UCM Faculty Exhibition—Gallery of Art and Design, Warrensburg  
2009 OVER\_VIEW 09—Bruno David Gallery, Saint Louis  
2009 Gallery Selections: Small Scale Works—Tobey Fine Arts, New York  
2006 Correspondence to a Single Point: A Survey of Geometric Abstraction—Tobey Fine Arts,  
New York  
2006 Hum—curated by Shinsuke Aso—Tobey Fine Arts, New York  
2003 The Wild Bunch—curated by Tim Rollins—White Box Gallery, New York

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Weant, Nancy. "Damon Freed: Calm, Cool, Coherent", Essay, Bruno David Gallery Publications, Exhibition catalogue, 2009

Nail, Sarah. "Easy on the Eyes", Sedalia Democrat, September 18, 2008

## **Damon Freed – Biography**

Damon Freed is an artist who cherishes balance, reason, and ambiguity. He expresses it through a variety of working methods; from abstracted realities to nonobjective paintings of grids and colorful forays – to prose and rhyming poems – and he believes reality exists on the edge of perception.

His Mother and Father have been his best and greatest influences. Agnes Martin and Brice Marden's work are among them in painting. In writing – Jack Kerouac, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Bukowski, Janet Frame, William Butler Yeats, and Emily Dickinson's work are among them.

Damon Freed received his B.F.A. from the School of Visual Arts in New York City with honors. His M.F.A. is from Hunter College, City University of New York. Freed taught at two places for 10 years at the college level. His first year was in '09 at the University of Central Missouri and then he began instruction at State Fair Community College the following year. Freed has studied with such luminaries as Jack Whitten, Marilyn Minter, Juan Sanchez, Sanford Wurmfeld and others! Among them are Tim Rollins, David Chow, Tobi Kahn, Lucio Pozzi, and Alice Aycock. He has been exhibited in galleries in New York City, Saint Louis, and Kansas City.

His poetry has been published by The Writer's Place online, The Rye Whiskey Review, and The New York Parrot. Damon has been featured in The Wall Street International Online, Art Forum, Caesura Online Magazine, the Saint Louis Riverfront Times, and the Saint Louis Beacon, and the Sedalia Democrat among others.

In painting and writing, his inspirations are his mom and Dad, sister and brothers, and friends, mostly, and the people he meets in every direction. He has 13 books of poetry and is self-published. *Go Forth!: Poems 2011-22* was published by World Inkers Printing and Publishing, 2022. It is out now and is an impressive full-length collection of his poetry to this point of publications! In 2023, World Inkers Printing and Publishing released *46 Scary Good Poems* by Damon Freed. A full-length book of poems. In 2024, Transcendent Zero Press is releasing *The Thin Gray Line*, for Taylor Swift by Damon Freed.

Damon Freed may be reached at <https://www.damonfreed.com> or by emailing him to [damonfreed@gmail.com](mailto:damonfreed@gmail.com).