



# Playing with Energies

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My images are artifacts derived from exploring the relationships between personal experience and concepts that I consider to be significantly relevant. The artifact that forms is a mindful residue from the act of being open to visionary revelation. This creative work is how I process and integrate my perceptions of the world into new ways of seeing and insights into living. In the following, I will touch upon the historical, social, and personal precedents for the inspiration and content for my work.

Throughout history, people have used the creative imagination to contemplate experience and reality in new ways that have led to the kinds of questions that facilitate paradigm-shifts. My creativity is catalyzed by recognizing that I have the potential for insight that can generate a greater depth and span of understanding of the nature of the worlds around, and within us. While the methods may differ radically, artists and physicists, (indeed all people because of the creative imagination) share the desire to investigate how the interlocking pieces of reality fit together. Artists strive to see and hear the world in novel ways, and the way they convey their transformed perceptions, whether in grace notes, stories wrote, or brush strokes, can help others experience a similar recalibration of perception.

My work resoundingly reflects my philosophy of life. My ethic as an artist is in pursuit of living with a greater awareness of the nature of the cosmos, being informed of the concerns of humanity, and being open to what I experience deeply. My practicum brings me to states of inspiration and peace while I struggle to translate the invisible into the experiential. Making images is my tool for discovery, and a by-product of the experience of my consciousness. Art serves as a mirror for my self and is the way of responding to beauty. Beauty is in the "I" of the beholder. I behold beauty in many places, but I feel it when I cease thinking and my self feels at one with what I am experiencing at the time. My creative drive is to somehow externalize my internal dynamic, to get it down on paper and look at it. Not to accept it as objective reality, but to accept it as part of human experience (subjective reality). My mission in art is to develop my perception of the world and ourselves, using my intuitive compass. A piece of art is experience's artifact that we can share with others. The artist seduces others to see the way they do.

I believe that making and appreciating images is a fundamental human motivation: the need of the artist to externalize their internal conception of things and context in the world. While political history describes the evolution of power among peoples and nations, the history of art describes the evolution of the human as a perceiving and feeling being seeking to express self, the world around and the greatest concerns and values. In attempts to make order out of chaos, humanity was able to enlarge and deepen perception of the external world, and thus become better able to understand, appreciate, realize, and eventually control at least some of its aspects. When primitive man first depicted animals upon the cave walls, it is thought that the aim was not aesthetic but a practical rite designed to help the tribe in the pursuit of the animal. The drawing originated from the impulse to realize the object, and so it was pursued with greater apprehension. Realization of the visionary impulse is an active grasping or apprehension, as opposed to a merely passive appreciation of aesthetics. The

artist who observed the antelope sufficiently closely to draw it on the cave wall better equipped the tribe to hunt it. Since this beginning, art has served the purpose of increasing awareness of the object- has enhanced the chances of survival/adaptation of the artist, and those that view the artwork. Not just a playful activity, or an investigative expenditure of excess energy- it is my opinion that art has continuously been a key to survival, an evolving expansion and sharpening of faculties essential to the struggle of existence.

My recognition of wanting to be an artist was a natural progression without any clear starting point. I have always drawn with a high degree of concentration. My talent was recognized early on by my parents and others who encouraged me to continue. A positive feedback loop was formed, so that I drew for the pleasure of others and correspondingly, myself. This became the basis for taking on further challenges. Increasingly, I discovered a well of creativity to tap and a compulsion to express ideas. My artistic interests in early childhood were monsters and humanoid creatures. I would watch these strange beings on the television or while playing videogames and attribute symbolic import to these forms in my imagination. Godzilla, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, the Terminator, werewolves. I have drawn somewhat regularly since age three. Around age ten, for a year or so, I regularly experienced night terrors where I would wake up in the middle of a dream and the experience would be merged with my waking reality for perhaps a half hour or so. I feel that the experience of seeing a subjective reality superimposed over the “real” world had a major impact on me. As a teenager I awoke to the significant meaning orchestrating existence and the dire importance of conscious evolution. At this stage, my work began to gain momentum to where I am now, and then, the artwork that surrounded the band Tool was a paramount influence. This included the artists Alex Grey, Cam de Leon, Chet Zar and Adam Jones. From there, my art influences have branched all over due to my exposure during art school studies. Still, my greatest influences seem to be the artists from

the Baroque, Romanticism, Symbolism, Surrealism, and Visionary art movements. By directing my attention to a combination of wisdom traditions and sociopolitical concerns I gained a deeper sense of principles and ethical intent that gave direction to my artistic purpose. Over time, I had a series of powerful and realigning experiences involving meditation, visualization, and catharsis. Some of these were in a forest, where I often ventured to find peace and understanding. Walking with full attention, without distracting thoughts, I deeply felt and envisioned the vastly interconnected ecology of the web of life. Reading, thinking, feeling, and creating art have triggered further subtle (and not so subtle) revelations. These catalytic cornerstones of proaction, meditation, and eclectic comprehension from a variety of interests- motivated me early on to use my talents for the betterment of myself, and others. Also, I have realized that if I did not feel like I were fulfilling a beneficial purpose in my art that I would rather be doing something else. The path of the artist is like that of the explorer: both sail into unknown territory to uncover a greater world.

I want my work to free the viewer from the constraints of how we have been taught to see. I do not want my work to end up under any confining labels that limit the possibilities of how my work is seen. New world views seem to form either through deconstruction, the “bootcamp” method which deconstructs the individual to be part of a group; or, through the “play” method that deconstructs the group consensus, allowing a sense of freedom in the individual. If you cannot play with what you already know, new ways of looking at things cannot be introduced.

The way I experience any painting is by entering it as a space in the experiential field of imagination. No matter how flat, how modernist, the painting may be - it has immediate value to me as an environment I project my mind into. There is a need to transcend the analytical and sometimes contradictory descriptions that distance me, the viewer, from it. I know it by going into it, and experiencing the visual world as a projection from inside- out into a space of being. A significant aspect of

how I conceive of my own work is the understanding of somatic -psychology. This is how the posture and placement of a body actually implies a state of being and dialogue with the environment that the viewer perceives immediately. In my work, the familiar form acts as a door to meaning in a landscape that may otherwise be alien for the viewer. I try to challenge consensus reality by depicting realism that is both immediate to and embedded in an extraordinary, yet invisible ecology. If my work needs to be categorized, that niche would probably be NeoSurrealism, but undoubtedly also related to the movement called Visionary.

In my image making, I am compelled to render convincing spatial environments with meditatively- intensive detail out of a desire to exercise a high, illusionistic craft while allowing the viewer's ability to relate to a space an easier entrance into an already challenging dynamic. In my process, I try not to think nor judge, but to trust my intuitive flow--- how I instinctively make connections with what is taking place in the picture plane. During the work, my focus leads to an open state where all of the thought and emotion that arises out of living is re-experienced and processed into the painting. This contemplative context gives rise in the image to the aesthetic and emotion that is the gestalt. As I create it, I find beauty and meaning as it arises from and returns to enrich my personal experience.

Though I am serious about my intent, being true to it requires that I wield creativity in an attitude of play. Playing takes you out of yourself and the present circumstances (no matter how dire). Play avoids constraints, stretches the sense of self, and allows a flexibility of finding new options. It involves the imagination; it may trigger or require it, but always involves it. I sometimes have such a discontent with the state of human affairs that I become distant from the clear sight and light-heartedness that I yearn for. My artistic practices bring me back to that euphoric simplicity. Disillusionment can set in when the struggle for satisfying stimulus begins to seem pointless, and so the

adaptive function of play and art may enhance the grasp of reality instead of merely providing an escape from it. My process and projections of art provide a stimulus of purpose, that of finding closer and truer relations with reality. In this way it puts me in touch with, and enhances my grasp of, the world. I am reminded of this understanding that consistently is forgotten as I sometimes get caught up in civilization, and its discontents. Dissatisfaction with the state of affairs can be a spur for creativity, and coupled with proaction and inventiveness offer solutions to those problems. Theories wrought by both science and art originate in imagining and experimenting with possibility. Fantasy is not merely escapist, but a way of playing with reality to better understand its nature. Art is play. I am at my best when I can set my own pace, but one with which I generally feel at odds. I need solitude, for great bolts of quiet and introspection. In these opportunities I am present with my vulnerable, free thinking, authentic self. Sometimes inspiration springs from acting on the necessity for creative contemplation and output. Few things feel better than this sense of propulsion. The feeling of forward motion in art brings me to a deep and abiding happiness, carrying with it recognitions of self-esteem. When I am procrastinating, waiting for things to become easier - I inevitably feel frustrated. The muse usually only visits while I am receptively working, not waiting passively for some grand unified idea. I find that so much of being an artist filters down to just doing it. There is little point in analyzing the resistance, except as a reminder of maintaining balance. This Inner Censor can always find reasons why I should stop, and so I remind myself why I should keep going. When I become too serious, too critical- demanding perfection, the work becomes frustrating. It is when I am able to play a little that it takes on a verve and elasticity.

Though I sometimes expect dramatic revelation within myself, those moments are usually only sudden in the sense of realizing how things have progressively come together. I do well practicing consistency. I think there is much to be said for a slow, more leisurely and meditative pursuit of

ideas. There is so much talk of “breakthroughs” that we subconsciously assume our creativity must behave dramatically, though this is seldom the case. Occasionally, I will have a flash of insight, and I try to live in a state fertile for more to dawn, but often it will be an entrancing, steady course. My creativity resembles sunlight more than lightning. The key is consistency in a continual challenging, renewing and honing. When I am working regularly, I am centered and art is the by-product of the commitment.

Throughout the last several years, I have filled many sketchbooks with drawing and writing. In these books, I have recorded notations from my thinking, feeling, visualizing mind in order to refer back to them from some distance for reflecting on more later and as potential fuel for art. Perhaps surprisingly, they are actually composed mostly of writing--- quickly fading dreams, especially meaningful passages from literature, mantras and poems, illustrative descriptions of my visualizations, notes from what people have said to me and diary entries that attempt to record glimpses of life’s profundity. My visual imagination has always been very active. When anything is said to me or read from words, I glimpse an image that is wrought from that instigation. Mostly, I struggle with this capacity as a lot of these triggered imaginings I would not choose to see. Also, most of what I see with my mind’s eye does not seem pertinent for me to devote attention in order to artistically realize. I take note of some of these visions, though, as if they are pieces of a puzzle or a seed from which a plant might sprout. These ongoing conversations with my many interests relax the tension on my nervous system and have provided a significant stratum from which my art has grown to form and color. In these books is where I usually work out possible solutions to creative problems as a stage of preparation in which the subject is investigated from different angles. Afterward, I allow the ideas a period of incubation, in which my conscious thoughts on the problem are abandoned passively in order for my unconscious to have space to process and rearrange the possibilities. When I am actively

working, this incubation occurs while I am entranced in dedicated and laborious detailing. In a time of very intense concentration, the conundrum is planted in my unconscious and it germinates underground until, suddenly, the solution emerges in clarity and the obstacles that were once there are no longer. The tension between what I perceive of the world and what I assume to be the world, is my existence and my art. Life does not lie with the subject or object, figure or ground, but as a result of a relationship, a correspondence, a continuity.

Journal entry from last year: “When I close my eyes and even if I manage not to think, consciousness still streams on, a great river of contents in a succession of different conditions which I have been taught to call thoughts, images, memories, interior dialogues, regrets, wishes, resolves, all interweaving with the constantly changing pageant of sensations, of which I am only selectively aware. Always the continuity. However, the continuity is an illusion. If consciousness is a flashlight’s beam, and it is flickered on and off, it would only be aware when on, and so think it is always on. The visionary capacity is to read between the lines, to visualize between the beams-- the meaning of the sensory information that is not apparent to consensual consciousness.”

The guidance I have received in art school has expanded my comprehension of art history, politics, and vocabularies. In addition, through these six years I have developed many modes of working from which I am developing unique techniques to successfully marry deep concept with high craft. Also, I have gained greater aptitude and comprehension for ways of translating thinking and feeling into communicable modes of visualization.

Over the past two years, the focus has been experimenting with, developing, and honing new aspects of my pictorial language. At the end of my undergraduate education, I had formed a cohesive and integral way of working, but needed more to further my

progress. In this graduate program, I have been able to let go of my preconceptions with more freedom of movement in order to allow new energies into my evolving work. These experiments have been greatly influenced by the artists and movements in the program's course. Also, the perspectives and techniques suggested by the guest artists and teachers have moved me to consider and try new modes of apprehending my practicum. After these phases of many, many critiques, I've assimilated the diverse perspectives so that now my own is less apt to pigeon-hole itself into run-of-the-mill habit. My abstract series completed during my first year, came from my desire to formulate a visual dimension of networks, informed by both my visionary perception of reality and by theoretical models of the cosmos from my studies in the fields of science. These geometric nets serve as a connective principle that attempts to explicate an implicated invisible aspect of reality. As a language of literal connectivity, they're an attempt to present forms of actualized conduits of empathy between the personal and impersonal, implying an exchange that is both expansive and inclusive. This new context articulates a relationship between the investigative observations of realism and abstraction, where one gives rise, gives meaning, to the other.

I have developed skill with many mediums and so consider myself varied, but am first and foremost a traditional artist. Currently, I feel that my forte is a layering of drawing and painting. I choose the digital medium when it is the most sensible for whatever reason (i.e. for the sake of time), usually only if it is an illustration job. In general, undoubtedly my fine art has been the most fulfilling for me as that is entirely directed by my own vision and explorative searching without a specific result in mind. This allows the process to be more of a meditation that is fertile for intimate unearthing. The key technical method of my process is a high-attention to detail in the formation of an interlaced layering that when finished- is integral. In my current drawing-painting technique: I sketch out the basic composition with a special attention given to the geometric shapes and relationships. Then (or

sometimes before the initial sketch), I collect reference photos to use for the observational realism, or merely to act as a guide (i.e. anatomical correctness). Using the sketches, reference, material spontaneity, and the evolving vision--- I begin drawing the image on the surface with graphite, charcoal, and ink. At this stage, the picture is rendered with detail, but above all- the values come in to give shapely form and spatial atmosphere. Once the composition has a solid foundation of structure and tonality, I move onto using pastel for smooth gradients of color. At this juncture, the structure has been blended into subtlety--- I fixative the image and apply a layer of matte medium to protect the image underneath and paper (if I'm not using canvas) from damage. Here, I use oil paint to add new elements, subtract or subdue others, and otherwise resolve the color and value in the context of the image's form and space. Each progressive stage is both a creative and destructive act for the sake of the whole: some parts are left to be clearly vibrant and distinct, while others are concealed, subtle, and merely implied by its relationship to the rest.

My current plans for the future are applying to art residencies around the world. I plan to bounce around from one to the next for a couple years until I have a gravity to stay in one place. Eventually, I will probably teach at the university level. I will continue mastering the artistic process of making the invisible energies of my perception into visible form. My visionary ability in every aspect will grow in correspondence to my developing consciousness. Also, with each day, each moment, I am trying to be a good gardener, keeping the soil of life fertile for whatever the future may bring. This implies an honoring of my own imagination and working for the glory of the act and the potential the image has to benefit the viewer. I believe that my imagination is best used to penetrate below surface appearances to reach a richer and deeper truth. My artworks are attempts to make some kind of coherent integral whole out of my own experience and view of life, and by virtue of my perceptions, enrich everyone's lives that see them. I aim to be a visionary of artistic thought and

form. For a visionary, draws not only consensus reality, but the lineaments of approaching reality. That is why Ezra Pound dubbed artists as “the antennae of the race.” This is why artistic perceptions are so often discounted as “not in reality,” when in fact they are a part of reality that we are not yet in, or aware of. As an artist, I consider my capacity to explore the territory of the human heart, braving the dark unknown to report back to the human tribe that a trail can be found, and we will survive. A scout and shaman of consciousness, trailblazing for community and culture. I think visionary art is play, but also serious in attempting to render an invisible but literal truth, where the image goes beyond the personal subjective sphere and reach a somehow transcendent domain.

My images cognate the developing philosophical underpinnings of my imagination, and also spur on novel senses of discovery as I create. Like a scientist, as an artist, —I consider the consciousness or model of perception that I stand on as only scaffolding from which to articulate more relevant and inspired planes of existence in the world. As sentient beings in relationship with the world around and within us, we need new, higher and integral perspectives to counterbalance the habit of taking life for granted. To articulate a visual vocabulary is to give greater depth to the language of seeing. Art provides an amorphous new language with which to understand the world in a new way. It can catalyze a state of being by helping to build a new structure of envisioning. My directive as an artist is to engage and communicate the meaning inherent before our eyes, which we do not see. My artwork reflects a sense of the “numinous,” which is characterized by the quintessential qualities of the sacred: mystery, awe, fascination, satisfaction, and inspiration. Once a piece of mine attains this state, it breathes with integrity and is ready to have a life of its own in the world. In my view, art serves as a reflection of our context, and achieves its maximum potential when it acts deliberately to improve and benefit the whole. This is what I am striving to do and I hope that my work, in some way, benefits you.

Thermodynamic Horizon



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