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Images of my mind

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IMAGES OF MY MIND

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May 25, 1987
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Date: 6/12/87

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Date: ________________________
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   3. Rational/intuitive connection
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INTRODUCTION

My purpose in writing this Thesis is to illuminate or expand upon the ideas and work projected in my paintings which relate to the images in my mind. These images are constantly changing, depending upon my reading, my contact with people, and other factors such as what is happening in the world and how I feel at that particular time. These images are a search for inner peace and harmony. My previous work had been a relationship primarily with the external world. Landscapes, portraits, and still-lifes were generally more interesting for me to paint than internal ideas. In reaching aggressively for more meaning, I have rediscovered and re-evaluated my thoughts regarding the human spirit. I know that religion can motivate people to revolution, or that belief may be profound in the individual's life to resist change. Most importantly, I think the definition of religion needs to be recognized in terms of psychology and philosophy. I may recognize the experiential inner and outer feeling of meditation as a necessary part of my life, but mine is of a personal nature. My belief is that it matters not how one believes so much as how one behaves. If I am of good moral, ethical, and sound conscience, my personal 'connectedness' (striving for a sense of wholeness) will interact at all levels of society and beliefs. Religion, or dogma,
to me, is important in the sense that it fills those emotional needs which are generally necessary in times of death or despair. My cognitive capacity and social environment may change, and with change, may come a change in my belief.

I have read so much which has influenced my painting during the past two years while in search of self, that it has been a means of reaching what I call "aesthetic spirituality." This spirituality is similar to the Taoist "ch'i," a Chinese religion and philosophy based on the teachings of Lao-tse (6th cent. B.C.). He advocated simplicity and selflessness, wherein the artist's ideal was to reach a state of tranquillity by becoming one with time and change, so that life is a floating and death a resting. The Taoist philosophical purpose was to work a transformation on the world and to open the individual's mind to his own intimate relationship with his universe. Therein lies the way to inner harmony and peace.
My search for wisdom and knowledge during the past two years at Rochester Institute of Technology has been one of rational and intuitive cognition. I do not know which brain hemisphere is stronger, but I do know that I need and use both to attain my goals. As Arnheim says, "Intuition and intellect do not operate separately but in almost every case require each other's cooperation." The goals I set for myself require order and my order has been derived in my painting in response to my reading and personal contacts. Painting is my vehicle for expression and search. Having grown up in the Western part of the world, but having visited the East, I can relate to how wisdom and knowledge have seemed to be similar, but I can relate to another version of their being polar opposites...that wisdom is a putting together and knowledge, a taking apart. It is this difference which is felt to have had an adverse effect on our beliefs. The East has had a way of envisioning unity or wholeness, whereas we have been more interested in knowledge, defined as that which accepts only that which can be verified by the senses, entailing the specific and diverse. It is thought that by combining the two modes of thought, we could become more whole.

Historically, and presently, ideas and circumstances have influenced the way we think and act. So-called primitive artists worked with materials available to them as we work with materials available to us today. Their concerns were essentially the same as ours in logic and reason. Whether art is made for its own sake or whether it is made to establish magical control has been a question the experts have sought answers to for some time. Beginning with primitivism, defined in Webster's dictionary in 1934 as a "belief in the superiority of primitive life "which implies a "return to nature", or tribal art... it contains motivations mainly dealing with birth, life and death. Myths or stories have always had relevance for human beings, I believe, and the psychologist Jung sees clues to the deepest hopes and fears of mankind in myths, to be studied carefully for the revelation of the depth of human nature. Jung said, "A tribe's mythology is its living religion, whose loss is always and everywhere, even among the civilized, a moral catastrophe". He, therefore, suggested individuation or a movement towards consciousness, in order to replace belief which he felt

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could no longer be rationalized by Christianity in our time. He wanted Christians to appreciate their treasurehouse of religious symbolism and to set about recovering its meaning for people today. Through Picasso's painting related to surrealism and Newman's primitive, spontaneous, and abstract form, one can envision man's aspirations as they saw them. Theirs was an art related to the dogmas of their time...Freud's subconscious ideas of the psyche, the turmoil of scientific versus Christian beliefs, and scientific logic was influential in their thinking just as today's beliefs in American society appear to have become more secular even though people seem to be getting more religious, with a return to nature, and with emphasis on the fact that human beings are social creatures who respond to their experiences of the world.

As I was working continuously with different ideas, my painting changed because of various other external stimuli, such as professors telling me I should layer the work, refine my palette, or that I should unify a painting, or question the human being in the work, or give the work more tension. Papers needed to be written for a mandatory graduate painting class, about which we were given a choice of topics to discuss or write. Artists were suggested by professors for me to research. For example, Mark Tobey and his "white
writing" style, or his calligraphic impulse, was inspiration for my calligraphic work in color. Tobey, U.S. born and Far East inspired, recognized, like Japanologist, Ernest Fenollosa, that duration and being exist only in the transitory, in change, in repetition. "The dimension that counts for the creative person is the space he creates within him or herself. This inner space is much closer to the infinite than any other, and it is the privilege of a balanced mind... and the search for an equilibrium is essential... to be as aware of inner space as outer space," Tobey believed.

Searching for the whole, or unity in painting led me to disciplines which were to be found in the proportions and patterns of nature. I learned that the basic principles underlying the greatest art so far produced in the world may be found in the proportions of the human figure and in the growing plant. These principles of design have been given the name "Dynamic Symmetry" and are identical with that used by the Greek masters in almost all the art produced during the great Classical Period. The plan is simple, but arithmetical analysis is necessary and it eliminates the personal element, so that all that is obvious is the artist's planning knowledge. Two kinds of symmetry, static and dynamic, were utilized in design. Static symmetry, an orderly arrangement of


6 Ibid., p. 11.
units or form about a center or plane, was the kind used most frequently. It was used exclusively in design after the decline of Athens and during the Hellenistic Age. Dynamic symmetry, used only by the Egyptians and Greeks, for design and use in architecture primarily, was suggestive of life and movement, and its great value lies in its power of transition or movement from one form to another. Material for the study of dynamic symmetry comes from Greek and Egyptian art, from the symmetry of man and plants, and from the five regular geometrical solids: the cube, the tetrahedron, the octahedron, the icosahedron and the dodecahedron. The skeleton is considered the best


8 Ibid., p. xv.

9 Ibid., p. 126. A cube is a solid figure contained by six equal squares. A tetrahedron is a solid figure contained by four equal triangles. An octahedron is a solid figure contained by eight equal and equilateral triangles. An icosahedron is a solid figure contained by twenty equal and equilateral triangles. A dodecahedron is a solid figure contained by twelve equal, equilateral, and equiangular pentagons. (An illustration labeled Exhibit AB follows, called The five Platonic solids, as shown in Idea and Image by Rudolf Wittkower, p. 112. See bibliography).
Exhibit AB

The Five Platonic Solids
source to work from for the artist; however, according to Hambidge's study, I read that mathematical order in the arts was first found in Egypt and Babylonia in the third millennium B.C., where rites, rituals, ceremonies and sacred buildings were influenced or governed by priests. The Greeks used intellectual rules, whereas the Christians used moral law. Hambidge thought there was a need for both and that by returning to a higher level of awareness an order of intelligent expression could then be achieved.

The elements of dynamic symmetry are the square and its diagonal which furnish the series of root rectangles. "Root-five" is the most distinctive shape derived from the architecture of the plant and the human figure, and is so called because the relationship between the end and side is as one to the square root of five, $1: 2.2360$ plus, $\pi$, a neverending fraction which we think of as irrational. The Greeks, however, said that such lines were not irrational, because the lines were commensurable or measurable in a square. The relationship then is one of area and not line, as shown. The rectangle of the whirling

10  

11  
Ibid., p. 17.

12  
Ibid., p. 18.

13  
Ibid., p. 18. (See illustration labeled BC, following page).
Exhibit BC

Method for Construction of all Root Rectangles
squares, 1.618, and the diagonal of a rectangle, and the diagonal of its reciprocal cut each other to form lines in continued proportion. Internal divisions are used as well.

Less known is the need for color complement to form complement in dynamic symmetry. The complement balance of a selected color, if reduced in purity or value, needs to have the complement reduced in reverse order.

Math became a theoretical science, of which Pythagoras is said to be the founder, of these infinite natures of irrational numbers. Plato, in the Timaeus, used two different kinds of Pythagorean mathematics...the numerical ratios derived from the harmonic intervals of the Greek musical scale with which we are now familiar. One of these, the pentagonal star was the sacred emblem of the Pythagorean fellowship, a universal symbol of a good sign. Harmonious proportions such as the Golden Section, represented the balance between two unequal asymmetrical parts, which means that the dominant is neither too big nor too small, so that this ratio appears at once

15 Ibid., p. 71.
16 Rudolf Wittkower, Idea and Image, Great Britain; Thames and Hudson, p. 112.
clear and of just measure. Arguments pro and con have existed for some time now, but it has been discovered that the human brain is capable of ordering the most complex sensory stimuli and shows a clear preference for the perception of simple mathematical patterns. The square, used by Le Corbusier and others in various ways...seems to reflect the spirit of our non-Euclidean and non-absolute age. If one believes everything I have written so far, you may rest assured I have read this information and am passing it along, but now I must say that in Idea and Image, Wittkower states that Hambidge was advocating his own creed and that creed of his time. (And, so it goes.)

Color remained an ongoing love affair for me, as well, as I 'refined' my palette. Refining my palette meant mixing my own colors and demonstrating a personal palette. After I had read about plastic representation (resemblance) and reference to language (which excludes plastic representation), I was still intrigued


18 Ibid., p. 120.
by Kandinsky's mystical or non-material idea of color, by Klee's abolishment of the separation of verbal signs and visual representations. I then painted 'homages' to these artists. Magritte, like the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, challenged the arbitrariness of the sign...that words do not "refer" to things, as in his painting "This is Not a Pipe". Modern art had spoken...a painting is nothing other than itself. I spoke with students from foreign countries who are currently students at Rochester Institute of Technology regarding the meaning of color in their respective countries, and found that, color relates only to the accepted functions as it relates to that society. For me, color relates to my physio-psychological make-up, or it may be a color exercise, or it may be that these are the only colors I have to work with right now. If I concern myself with Newton's theory of wavelength of color rays which proved that white light contains all color and that black is the negation of all color I become concerned with the longer wavelengths seen as more physical or more material, and the shorter as being more spiritual, because the faster the wavelength of the color ray, the closer it approaches pure energy. If I concern myself with Goethe's theory of the red,

yellow and blue triad, I regard color as subjective, mystical and understand his philosophical idea of green being both the symbol of heaven and hope as opposed to red being the symbol of earthly power. Used with line, I may create tension through use of thin-thick, vertical-horizontal, active-passive, curved-straight, continuous flow, but my emphasis is on relativity.

Ideas merged and meshed chaotically as stimulations came from all directions. In one course, we took the Myers-Briggs personality test to find out our science of behavior analysis. Because of that, I thought about Freud, (unconscious behavior), Jung, (archetypes of the collective unconscious), Skinner, (behavior modification), Maslow, May, and Rogers, (humanist psychology), and social-cognitive psychology, (the fact that we are social creatures and that we respond to our experience of the world rather than to the world itself), and how it relates to our society today. I read that the human, throughout time, is believed to be the key that will

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unlock the hidden mysteries of God and the universe. It is said that knowledge of Self, enables one to be a server of the race and an expression of God incarnate. Damascius, the Greek, speaks of the 'form of radiance', Don Juan in Castaneda's Tales of Power, draws a diagram in some ashes from a fire to represent the luminous body of the human, and in the Vedas or holy writings of India, the human is spoken of as the 'honey eater'; who comes to the hive of the soul in order to partake of the divine nectar of the spirit. In The Secret Doctrine, Madame Blavatsky, the Theosophical teacher, quotes a passage from Buddhist teachings which is very appropriate to the study of the subtle anatomy of man:

The Lord Buddha has said that we must not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; nor traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity; nor rumours, as such; nor writings by sages, because sages wrote them; nor fancies that we may suspect to have been inspired in us by a Deva (that is, in presumed spiritual inspiration); nor from inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems an analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our
teachers or masters. But we are to believe when
the writing, doctrine, or saying is corroborated
by our own reason and consciousness. 'For this,'
says he in concluding, 'I taught you not to be-
lieve merely because you have heard, but when you
believed of your consciousness, then to act accord-
ingly and abundantly.'

My own consciousness was becoming more attuned to my own way of
thinking. I then read about artist Yves Klein, who, in his artwork,
"Leap into the Void", 1961, attempted to capture the sensation of a
higher level of consciousness, by physically endangering himself as
he leapt out of a building window, knowing that his personality faced
absorption into the infinite. And Castaneda became awareness itself,
even though all of his being seemed to burst into a thousand pieces.

Other readings were of conceptual art in which earth works
reflect the ideas and beliefs of the primitives' fears and anxieties,
which were relevant in that today's modern weapons and high technology

22
David V. Tansley, Subtle Body; New York; Thames and Hudson,

23
Ibid., p. 95.
are anxieties for some of us. Other art such as A.R. Penck's "Defense," 1983, and Haring's graffiti film symbolism stated that our language must become universal so that we may expand and understand that which is foreign to us so that we may change, if necessary. This, then, led me to think about anxiety related to stress. A friend had told me about a new product called BIODOT, a chemical circle which would reveal a person's stress level through color change when worn on the back of one's hand. This, then led to a further investigation of stress, as discussed in a medical pamphlet published by Blue Shield, Blue Cross. My own painting was changing as my mind absorbed and assimilated all of these new ideas. I have never thought I was a wonderful artist, but my work was becoming even less narcissistic than before. My painting was becoming more complex and formal, with a deep underlying order amidst all of the chaos. My ego had been replaced by an inner process related to my complex thinking.

*Order Out of Chaos* by Prigogene and Stengers, a book recommended for me to read by an advisor, stated that science is not an "independent variable"... but an open system embedded in society, powerfully influenced by its external environment, and in a general way, its development is shaped by cultural receptivity to its dominant ideas, the whole arrow of time being irreversible, whereas Newton's system was considered "reversible". Prigogene and
Stenger's philosophy is that irreversible processes are the source of order. It is the processes associated with randomness and openness that lead to higher levels of organization, such as dissipative structures. Other arrows of time reflected other ideas and I decided that I believed in my own subjective arrow of time relative to my time-space.

I concluded that my own personal belief and identity ruled supreme and whatever I believed would depend on my experience and the mitigating existential circumstances. My culture, history, language and nervous system are a part of my interconnections with my universe and, as David Layzer (Harvard astronomer) points out, "the universe is unfolding in time but not unraveling; on the contrary it is becoming constantly more complex and richer in information." Therefore, if we all concern ourselves with the problems of the world, the common good of everyone can be attained. I thought of the great Chinese teacher Confucius (5th or 6th cent. B.C.) whose teaching was similar to the Old Testament's "Do not do

24 Ilya Prigogene and Isabelle Stengers, Order Out of Chaos; Toronto; Bantam Books, 1984, p. xxiii.

to others what you would not wish others to do to you," and Lao Tzu's (7th cent. B.C.) Golden Rule expressed in positive terms, "Do good to them that hate you." His philosophy of the foundation of order, dark (yin) and light (yang), principles relate to nature and the Primal Arrangement of the I Ching's trigrams have always been held up by some as the best example of how to live. If we follow these rules, then the hand of every human being becomes holy. The divergence between countries, as well as human beings, would soon cease to exist and there would be peace and harmony everlasting. My painting is my imaginative energy and it is a type of language, or mark, which reflects my personal cosmic evolution. Perhaps this says it as well as any saying:

As being is to becoming, so is truth to belief. If then, Socrates, amid the many opinions about the gods and the generation of the universe, we are not able to give notions which are altogether and in every respect exact and consistent with one another, do not be surprised.

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PLATO, Timaeus

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My "ch'i," or vital energy in art, is an ongoing process for me as painting continues to be my ultimate relationship with my universe as I continue my search for wisdom and knowledge.
My work has been primarily done on paper, purchased, found and handmade, for the purpose of spontaneity and naturalness. It has been a means of achieving my goals with greater freedom and ease of handling. I have experimented with all kinds of materials available in art and other stores. I have used natural, or found materials, (stones, twigs, plastic boxes), and investigated other areas...photography (dyes), fabric dyes, iridescent plastics and velcro, when necessary, to explore and experiment in new areas.

I tried the ancient art of gold leaf on paper while combining it with new metallic colored papers which may change in color over time. The ancient method of making paper was explored, while trying a new type of marbling, (mixing liquid starch with oil paint)...as exemplified in my "piecza" (pun on the word pizza) box. Using water resist materials with inks, watercolors, water soluble crayons, acrylic paints, and water based oil paints have been part of my exploration, too.

Different types of watercolor papers were tried, so that comparisons could be made for the non/absorbency-absorbency of pigment, spreading/non-spreading quality, and reworking ability for the layering process of various materials including inks, watercolor pigment, water-soluble crayons, oil crayons and acrylic paint build-up.

Paper was also my preference of choice in that it was very flexible...able to be torn, cut or worked easily, even to the extent of
collage work which involved gluing, taping, or the addition of three dimensional handmade paper objects.

Working drawing into painting in mysterious and ambiguous thin/thick, dark/light and kinetic/static line is readily accomplished on a paper surface as well.

Ease of handling is another factor which I like about paper. It may be carried easily and allows flexibility in changing one painting from one frame to another frame. This is accomplished by affixing velcro tabs to the frame and to the paper painting.

Paper allows for transformations to take place when reworked by wetting the paper and working back in to an existing work in progress, thereby giving me new insight, or a change in my perception about the work.

No material was ruled out as a possibility to work with, in order to further my exploratory goals and search for knowledge, as motivated by my teachers. The experimentation resulted in knowing the limitations or aspects of the materials used.
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Wittkower, Rudolf, Idea and Image; Great Britain; Thames and Hudson,
1978.
EPILOGUE

My art has been a vehicle of rediscovering my relationship with my cosmos through the experience in this time-space of historical reading, current topics reading and relationships primarily with people in the western hemisphere. The paintings, as shown, have significance in that they relate to my internal as well as external interpretation of how I saw and felt them as I did my work.


2. Dichotomy of Theophany 1, 11, 111 and Dichotomy of Theophany - Related to my book, *Symbol Art* by Leonard Everett Fisher, beliefs of man, art and science, and readings about the Cubists and the Bauhaus.

3. Golden Section, or Quest for Excellence - Related to my study of the Renaissance ideal of classicism in *Idea and Image*, *The Power of Limits* by Gyorgy Doczi, and other books related to this topic, plus our present government's "Quest for Excellence" ideal.

4. Grid Painting, My Language - Related to other art works using grids, i.e., Chuck Close's work, reading of *The Structure of Art* by Jack Burnham, plus my own "handwriting" (automatism), as in all works.

5. Collaborative Painting - A painting made with Patty Battaglia. Patty came into my studio with a computer-generated image and my thoughts
were that her generation is more adept at using the computer than my generation.

6. Gold-leaf handmade paper "face" - Related to The Possible Human by Jean Houston, The Alienation of Modern Man by Fritz Pappenheim and current feelings about man being capable of bettering his existence, in all fields - enviromental, peace, social, etc.

7. "Piecza" Box - Experimental work related to exploration of old and new materials, plus the connection of current food craze about pizza and my own enjoyment of freely putting piece together.

It is relevant that my work did not focus in one specific area, that when I discovered an area I wished to know more about, I would look in the index of many books to find out as much as possible about the subject. My painting would be a reflection or mirror of state of mind and idea at a specific time, and experiences up to, and including the past two years.

The grid, for instance, was primarily a result of reading The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths by Rosalind E. Krauss. She discusses how she envisions structuralism as compared to Clement Greenberg, the art critic of fame during the middle of the 20th century...an opposite viewpoint in that Greenberg's was historicist in nature and hers is anti-historicist, or includes the substitution and
nomination of the form. In her view, the grid was hostile to literature: a barrier between arts of vision and language. In modern art, it was spatial (flattened, geometricized, ordered, unreal) and temporal (emblem of modernity). The grid, used in 16th or 17th century perspective, was the science of the real...a demonstration of the way reality and its real-world referent did in fact relate to one another, the first being a form of knowledge about the second.

The modern artist had to choose between the sacred and the secular, the grid being a secular form of belief, which served not only as emblem but as myth, (materialism, or science, or logic), while providing a release into belief. The structuralists saw the function of myths as a cultural attempt to deal with contradiction of creation myths of which Levi-Strauss finds conflict...man born from the earth and later ones involving sex between two parents. The first has continued to be accepted, so, therefore, the function of myth is to allow both views to be held in some kind of para-logical suspension. There is a need to look into the past of the individual, or that of the culture, or tribe... therefore, although the grid is not a story, it IS a structure and one that allows a contradiction between values of science and spiritualism.

Grids were used even in the 19th century, (windows), by symbolists,
who were opposed to any traffic at all between art and science, or for that matter, between art and "reality". Metaphysics, or physiological optics, were the primary concern, and grids can be found in many artworks...as repetition, of space into the frame itself, etc., so it may be thought of as a dichotomy and, therefore, the only way to truly know what the artist is thinking is to know in terms of etiology. (not developmental, but the "history" of the individual). Krauss believes that the most modernist thing about the grid is its capacity to serve as a paradigm or model for the antidevelopmental, the antinarrative, the antihistorical.

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1. Pythagoras Theorem (84" x 79")
2. Dichotomy of Theophany (52" x 50")
3. Dichotomy of Theophany 1 (22" x 30")
4. Dichotomy of Theophany 11 (22" x 30")
5. Dichotomy of Theophany 111 (22" x 30")
6. Golden Section, or Quest for Excellence (72" x 52")
7. Grid Painting - My Language (64" x 52")
8. Collaborative Painting/Patty Battaglia (6½" x 10")
9. Gold-leaf Handmade Paper Face (12½" x 13½")
10. "Piecza" Box (12" x 14")
PLATE 1

PYTHAGORAS THEOREM

84" x 79"
DICHOTOMY OF THEOPHANY

52" x 50"
DICHOTOMY OF THEOPHANY 1
22" x 30"

DICHOTOMY OF THEOPHANY 11
22" x 30"

DICHOTOMY OF THEOPHANY 111
22" x 30"
GOLDEN SECTION, OR QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE

72" x 52"
GRID PAINTING - MY LANGUAGE

64" x 52"
COLLABORATIVE PAINTING/PATTY BATTAGLIA

$6\frac{1}{2}'' \times 10''$
PLATE 9

GOLD-LEAF HANDMADE PAPER FACE

12½” x 13½"
"PIECZA BOX"

12" x 14"