

Spring 5-19-2017

Beginner's Mind

Martin L. Benson

University of New Orleans, New Orleans, mlbenso2@uno.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>



Part of the [Art Practice Commons](#), [Buddhist Studies Commons](#), [Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons](#), [Comparative Philosophy Commons](#), [Contemporary Art Commons](#), [Esthetics Commons](#), [Fine Arts Commons](#), [Hindu Studies Commons](#), [Interdisciplinary Arts and Media Commons](#), [Metaphysics Commons](#), [Modern Art and Architecture Commons](#), [Other History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons](#), [Other Philosophy Commons](#), [Painting Commons](#), [Philosophy of Mind Commons](#), [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#), [Sculpture Commons](#), and the [Theory and Criticism Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Benson, Martin L., "Beginner's Mind" (2017). *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 2365.
<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/2365>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.

Beginner's Mind

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
In
Fine Arts

By

Martin Leland Benson

B.A. The University of Southern California, 2010

May, 2017

Copyright 2017, Martin Leland Benson

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Otylia Jane, my parents, Julie and David, my brothers, Cooper and Harris, and my grandmother, Roberta. Your support over the years has allowed me to grow in ways unimaginable and I couldn't have done any of this without the love you continually shine upon me. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to David Miller, my high school art teacher, whose friendship and influence gave me the confidence to pursue this path as an artist and fellow teacher. I love all of you more than I could ever express through words.

Acknowledgement

I am so appreciative for the friendship and guidance given to me by my thesis committee members, Kathy Rodriguez, Ariya Martin, and Aaron McNamee. Your thoughtfulness and engagement was so invaluable during this process. I am also so thankful for the rest of the graduate faculty for constantly challenging my thinking and supporting the development of my work. Although at times there was great difficulty and frustration, I look back at my experience at UNO and feel that it was so healthy for the longevity of my art practice, to which I will forever be grateful.

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	vi
Abstract.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Technology and Mindfulness.	3
Geometry and Symmetry.....	14
Paradox and Meta-Modernism	27
Perception and Beginner's Mind.....	30
Op-Art and Color Theory.....	34
Conclusion.....	41
Bibliography.....	43
Vita.....	45

List of Figures

Figure 1. Agnes Martin, <i>Untitled #10</i>	4
Figure 2. <i>Buddhist monks working on a sand mandala</i>	6
Figure3. <i>Crossroads</i>	7
Figure 4. <i>Orbs</i>	9
Figure 5. James Turrell, <i>Breathing Light</i>	11
Figure 6. <i>The Venus Well</i>	12
Figure 7. <i>Sri Yantra</i>	17
Figure 8. <i>Yantra</i>	19
Figure 9. Kelsey Brookes, <i>Mean Ratio 2X</i>	21
Figure 10. <i>One Pointedness</i>	22
Figure 11. <i>Study drawing</i>	23
Figure 12. <i>An Open Heart</i>	25
Figure 13. <i>The Cradle</i>	26
Figure 14. Richard Anuszkiewicz, <i>Centered Square, Red Pink 1055</i>	34
Figure 15. <i>The Watercourse Way</i>	35
Figure 16. <i>Emptiness</i>	38

Abstract

My art distills my relationship to spirituality, digital culture, and the practices and side-effects therein, into a simplified visual language. The work manifests in the form of paintings, drawings, and light sculptures. Meditation and mindfulness training are a large part of my influence and interests. I often wonder how mindfulness practice can be mirrored in my artwork, not only in my process for creating the work, but also with what the resulting imagery does for the viewer. My intention is to provide an art form that invites one to look and experience one's own capacity to observe, without the need for immediate intellectualization. I wish to offer people an opportunity to focus their attention on the phenomenological sensations that emanate from the art, to take a step back from the conceptual part of the mind, and step into a part that's more fundamental to our moment to moment reality.

Contemporary Art, Digital Culture, Spirituality, Mindfulness, Painting, Drawing, Phenomenology, Sculpture, Geometry,

Introduction

I feel the distinct weight of the palette knife in my hand, the subtle vibrations of my own breath, and the vividness of color rushing toward my eyes. The nuances of texture and glare smear left and right as I peer deeply into the paint, seeking something unknown to my intellect and yet so clearly to some other part of my mind. Perhaps it's the omniscience of my heart, my soul, or my intuition. I like to view all three as different expressions of the same quality of awareness that rests beyond my ego. Through patience, calmness, and complete attention I find the ability to uncover some part of me that's stable, everlasting, and fully at ease. Yet, as fast as I can step into this quality of being, I can be taken out equally as fast by the onslaught of thoughts rushing back into my mind. My commitment to this awareness practice, which comes from Buddhist teaching, is a useful method which can help me cultivate a deeper and longer lasting connection with this essential ground of who I know myself to be. The more I practice, the deeper I connect and the longer I can remain immersed in the mystery of each moment. However, it is an ongoing battle for me to maintain such a practice, especially in the wake of our digital culture. I find myself consumed by glowing screens, enticed by social media, bombarded with text alerts, and a slave to my email. At a certain level I view my artwork as an expression of this struggle for balance between the natural and digital along with the internal and external worlds that I occupy.

My practice as an artist is an extension of mindfulness training that permeates my whole life. I paint because of its antithetical nature to the virtual world. I find the tactility and immediacy so evocative in relation to the digital. I find the history of painting comforting in

that it connects me to a lineage older than human civilization. It is these two aspects of painting that I identify with that generate a sense of balance with this virtual culture that was reared during my childhood. Growing up on the cusp of the so-called “millennial generation,” I remember a time without cell phones, Internet, and all the digital amenities of the 21st century. I see the digital and virtual entity almost like a peer, in that it has grown up alongside me. I view the analog as a wise grandmother, there to protect and ground me along the way. I know I need both in my life, and my inquiry as an artist centers around this journey towards harmony between them.

The content of my paintings relates directly to my personal relationship with the dichotomies of the analog and the digital along with distraction and attention. The paintings are abstract and minimal, focusing on color as a means of evoking physical and emotional sensations. The work employs a playfulness with shape through the use of both traditional and non-traditionally shaped substrates. In order to explore these interests in a more balanced way, I create sculptures that similarly play with shape. However, I utilize glowing light instead of paint. I view the use of light as a way to acknowledge the digital technology of today and implement it to express my desire for a more balanced and harmonious relationship. I find fault in extremes of any kind, which is why I use my art as a way to touch some sort of center between complete resistance and complete obedience toward the dynamics of living in today’s world.

Technology and Mindfulness

A large side effect I have noticed from the digital age is the dulling of my attention due to the over saturation of information, enhanced by the incredible accessibility I have to it. I feel grateful to be able to say that out loud, to be aware of this effect so I can do my best to counteract it. I have learned to do this through almost a decade of study in yoga and meditation, which has deeply informed my practice as an artist.

Buddhist Mindfulness practice emphasizes being present. One cannot feel real if one is lost in memory, wishes, plans, autobiography, -even if one amps up the stimulation, which is our cultures usual strategy for trying to make ourselves feel real. Knowing, in Tibetan Buddhism's fourth moment, is said to be direct and unfiltered. It bypasses, one's personal egoic story. Artists talk about seeing nature and people directly, in a way that is vivid, ungraspable, even 'Authentic.' To be sure, art can lull one into mindless somnolence, but it can also capture and hold the attention, making the viewer or reader a true witness.¹

This approach to mindfulness practice, as spoken above, goes hand in hand with the way I paint, and many artists that I admire and am influenced by approach the medium in a very similar way. One of the most influential to my practice is Agnes Martin.

"The worst thing you can think about when you're working is yourself,"² states Martin. To me this sums up the art of mindfulness practice: The ability to let go of the doer, and become the "doing." This practice of emptying and letting go of my identity or personal history when painting yields tremendous peace and acceptance toward the mystery of life. From this deep attention I feel more aware and connected to the nuances of the creative act. When I

¹ Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacob. *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*. Berkeley (Calif.): U of California, 2004. Print. p44.

² Dir. Chuck Smith. *Interview With Agnes Martin*. <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/agnesmartin>. N.p., 3 Feb. 2016. Web. 21 Jan. 2017.

look at the painting *Untitled #10* (**Figure 1**) by Agnes Martin, I resonate with the simplicity and delicacy of the composition and marks. What may appear as austere to some comes across as complete openness and vastness to me; the work becomes less like a narrative or a telling of sorts, and transforms into a mirror. This quality of her work is something I admire and reveals to me a similarity of intention when it comes to the evolution of my own work.

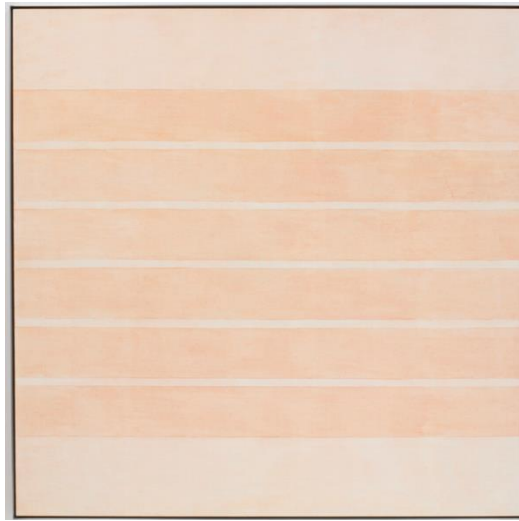


Figure 1. Agnes Martin, *Untitled #10*, 2002.

The paintings I have been developing for the past year and a half touch upon a similar approach. The ritual emptying of my mind begins with the drawing of parallel lines or laying of tape across the substrate. Preparing the simple compositional guides becomes a repetitive endeavor that is repeated through the rest of the process. My decision to both use and not use tape, depending on the particular piece, gives me more insight into the effects and qualities of what can happen on a given surface. I find that this openness to both approaches reflects my deeper intentions toward harmony amongst opposites.

Once I set these tape or pencil guides, I move toward the paint and begin discovering which colors call me. At times I have a clear idea of the colors, while other times I begin

spontaneously, but in both instances, I concentrate on remaining open, empty, and receptive. Vivid color has always been magnetic to my senses, and color theory continues to fascinate me. Agnes Martin implements softer, earthier and more neutral color. I find the manipulating of saturated color to be a natural expression of my own experience. The color becomes a transference of my mind and emotion, stringing colors together like music notes on a scale. It's all math, it's all about the wave forms and how they intermingle with each other to create vibrations in my visual field of perception.

After I spend time seeking an intuitive resonance with a particular color, I find the simple repetition of mixing toward different values to be a constant experience of discovery. The infinite potential of mixing paint and finding unique expressions of colors is so enriching. It connects me to my intuitive self, and teaches me about the subtle power that color holds to unlock deeper layers within me. Finally, the brushing of the paint on the surface in simple swatch-like arrangements that move left, right, up, down, or diagonally becomes akin to the repetitive marks of aboriginal dream painting and cultivates a similar quality of attention to that of the Buddhist monks constructing their sand mandalas (**Figure 2**).



Figure 2. Buddhist monks working on a sand mandala.

Due to my personal relationship with the spiritual traditions of Vedic Yoga and Buddhism, each time I brush paint on the surface I internally repeat a Sanskrit mantra, extending my *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) into my painting. Knowing that I do this may be relevant or irrelevant depending on who is asking, but for me it is what grounds my intention and awakens emptiness. This emptying out of the mind creates space to connect more deeply to a place beyond my individual self, to become more of a vessel for creative and emotional energy to pass through. I believe that this process fundamentally connects me to a level of consciousness that permeates the whole of life. This connection is what spirituality is about for me. There is a place within me, a place I feel Agnes Martin refers to, and I can't help but reach for and invoke it through the creation of art.

The first painting (**Figure 3**) that cut through to the essence of what I had been seeking in my previous work, opened a door to a more refined way of approaching painting. The painting is made up of a combination of five individual panels, arranged in the form of a large symmetrical and vertically-oriented cross. This shape spans almost the entire height of an eight-foot wall. When inspecting the painting closely one can see each of the hundreds of strokes of paint, shifting from a saturated color into lighter and lighter tints of that same color.



Figure 3. Crossroads, 2015, acrylic on wood panels, 72" x 90"

This piece was an experiment that became a breakthrough, in that it stayed true to my intentions with painting and at the same time opened up the content into vaster territory,

allowing people more room to connect. This greater openness that the imagery evoked allowed for people to bring more of themselves to the work because it lacked any objective or definitive reference. I was interested in playing with subtle optical effects through the juxtaposition of alternating hues of shifting values. The hues shift from their most saturated to a more subdued version. Each row shifting against the grain of the rows above and below it invited more movement of light, which awakened more energy without overwhelming the eyes. I found this playfulness with the optical effects to be engaging as it seemed to draw me in and keep me both attentive and inquisitive. I like this combination of deep awareness followed by a sense of curiosity, and the work I made from that point aimed at this quality of response. However, a large part of how the work came to be is rooted in the mindfulness of each step. I look at painting as both an act that deepens my own experience while at the same time bears an artifact of that occurrence which someone else can experience as well.

After I made the painting *Orbs* (**Figure 4**) I began to notice an interesting layer of content I did not originally intend with this new direction I was headed in. The shifting values that evoked these sensations of light, along with the visibility of each swatch of color, related to the language of pixels in digital media. Pixels are square bits of information that combine to create a whole, which is similar to how the swatches of color function in the paintings. In a subtler way the abstract imagery has a connection to the technological culture I am seeking to find balance with in my own life.

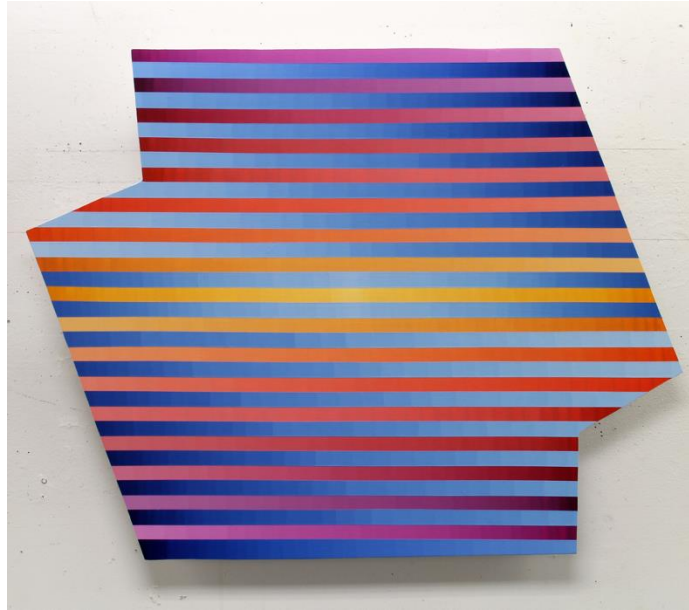


Figure 4. Orbs, 2015, acrylic on shaped panel, 44" x 40".

Not only does the practice of making the painting work to strengthen my attention and awareness, which can be spread thin by digital media, but also the resulting image points back to some of the fundamental imagery of that media itself. This sort of circuitous connection seems to strengthen the depth of the work and helps point in a direction that is both universal and personal at the same time.

Another side of my practice revolves around sculpture and experiential installation. The sculptures touch upon technology in a more direct way in that they utilize varying technological systems. It does this through the use of laser cutting, which is reliant upon computer drawn vectors, as well as through the use of LED light technology. Light in and of itself is such an entrancing element we interact with at all times. My personal observations lead me to believe that as humans we are both consciously and unconsciously attracted to both sources and reflections of light. Whether through the rising and setting sun, the glowing moon, shimmering

stars, the dance of fire, the reflection of light across still water, or warm illuminations on trees and sidewalks, as humans we can't escape our innate gravitation toward the phenomena of light in all its manifestations. This is especially true in today's world, where we are inundated with glowing screens. These glowing screens seem to attract us to a point of detriment when looked at too long, or too late in the night. It has been proven to disrupt circadian rhythms associated with sleeping patterns as well as have harsh effects on our eye sight. However, the technology that allows for glowing screens can also be used to create positive effects as well.

James Turrell is an artist who uses light technology and spatial architecture to evoke heightened experiences of the phenomenology of perception. I remember distinctly the first time I ever interacted with one of his installations at LACMA, which was titled *Breathing Light* **(Figure 5)**. I remember walking into a room where I took off my shoes and put on sterile, white booties, and then proceed up a flight of stairs. At the top I stepped through a large rectangular opening into a blank space spilling over with vivid shifting light. While in the space I became hyper-aware of my own body and perception. Out of nowhere I began to experience light as something physical. To my eyes it felt as if I could see light itself, just like I can fog, or dust, or particles in the air. This experience of the open space, that appeared to have no corners and no end, along with the physical presence of light, enraptured me. After about 15 minutes we were forced to leave the space, and I remember having the feeling like I wanted to stay forever.

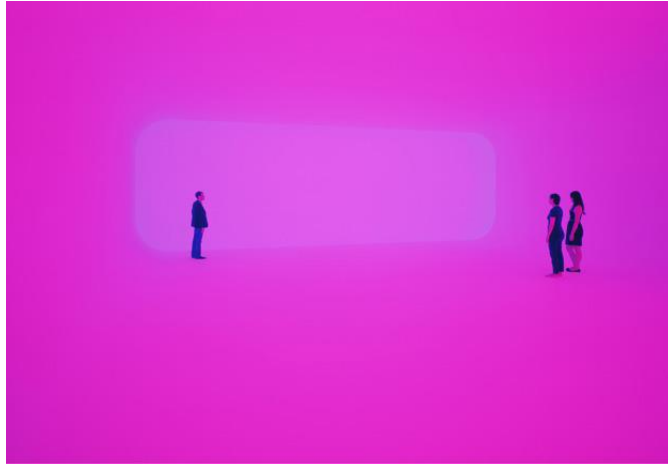


Figure 5. James Turrell, *Breathing Light*, 2013, LED light into space, dimensions variable.

My interaction with Turrell's work stuck with me in a very deep sense. Some of the feelings I had in that space are the feelings I try to create in my own way through my art. One of my most recent installations garnered the same type of response that I got from Turrell's work. While in the program at UNO I was commissioned by the Arts Council of New Orleans to create an installation for LUNA Fete, which is an annual festival that celebrates and showcases contemporary artists who use light and technology in their work. The project I created was titled *The Venus Well* (**Figure 6**) and was a large pyramid platform, where at the top of its 3 tiers was a structure that resembled a wishing well. The entire pyramid was illuminated with LED lights placed underneath each set of stairs.

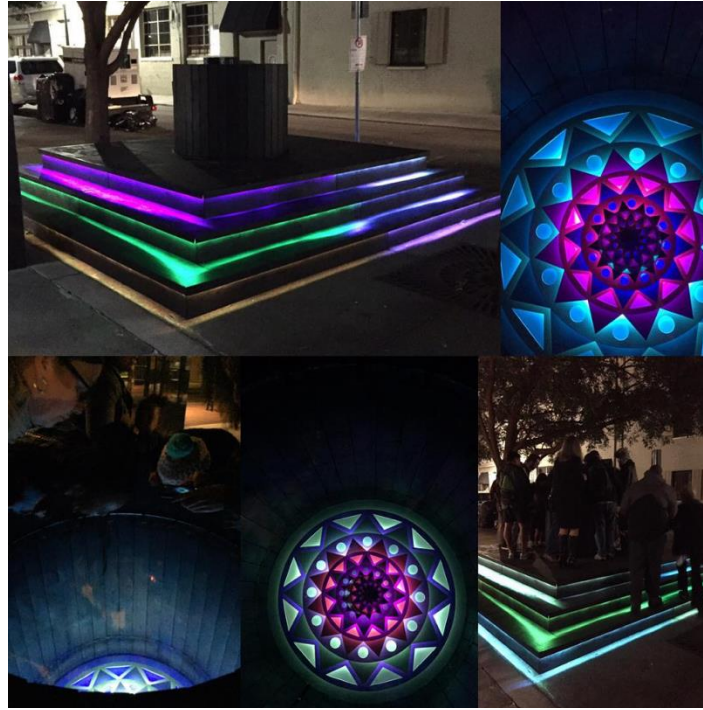


Figure 6. The Venus Well, 2016, wood, paint, LED lights, soundscape, 13'x 13' x 5'

The pyramid was vibrating at a low deep frequency from a large speaker placed inside of it. As people walked up the stairs they could feel the vibrations moving through their bodies via the soles of their shoes. Finally, as they approached the wishing well and peered down in, many were caught off guard. As people peered deeper over the edge, getting their bodies more involved, the well began to open up into what looked like an infinite kaleidoscopic tunnel, breathing with colored light. This infinity effect was achieved through the use of mirrors, and this play with mirrors and reflection is something that seeps into my sculptural work. Mirrors and reflections distort reality while at the very same time highlight our relationship to the paradox of both objective and subjective perspective.

People experienced a heightened awareness of their bodies, a deeper presence that was drawn in by the surprise and mystery surrounding what was happening inside of the well. After

having the opportunity to observe a large amount of people interacting with this installation, I noticed the sense of awareness and curiosity experienced by most. It was wonderful to be able to reference digital technology with light in a way that brought people back home to their bodies and heightened their senses of awareness. I enjoy using these materials to this end, because a lot of the ways we use technology via our phones, TV's and computers tend to take us out of our bodies and disrupt our attention span.

The entire project inspired me in many ways, and showed me that it is possible, through art, to express a harmony with digital technology. I love the idea of using this part of my practice to engage the body and public space. Through painting this is a little more difficult, however I feel that the combination of painting and drawing, along with sculpture and installation, there is plenty of room to evolve my ideas.

Geometry and Symmetry

A major theme that is present in my work, centers around the use of geometry, both as an aesthetic and symbolic language. Geometry is fascinating to me, not only because of its simplistic beauty, but because of its connection to the mathematical reality latent in the development of the cosmos. The mysteries of geometry and the immense history of its knowledge and usage, both for scientific and artistic function, attract me deeply to it. The western philosopher Plato stated that “Geometry is knowledge of the eternally existent.”³ This quote points toward the fact that within all creation lies an exquisite geometric architecture that is the basis for all complex life forms. The more I learn about geometry, and the more time I spend meditating upon it, the deeper my commitment to it as a visual language becomes.

Geometric principles, such as the phi ratio, pi ratio, and fractal mathematics are at the basis of how natural forms propagate, evolve, and express themselves on the macro and micro levels. The basis of natural forms relate to triangles, circles, spirals, rectangles, and polygons. These basic shapes underpin and influence the growth into more organic deviations found in flowers, leaves, roots, rivers, animals, galaxies and so much more. What is fascinating for me to contemplate is how within my own body there exists a microscopic universe of molecules, atoms, electrons, and quanta's; all presided over by mysterious mathematical and geometric laws.

³ K. L. French. *The Hidden Geometry of Life: The Science and Spirituality of Nature*. London: Watkins, 2012. Print. p.21.

I find this notion that the human body is created and sustained through geometry to be an important factor in why I use it as a personal visual expression in my art practice. I feel there is a part of the unconscious mind that recognizes geometric forms as something a part of instead of separate from itself. This perhaps is why so many artists from the Renaissance were so attracted to the classical artists, because it reached toward what was innate and universal about the natural world. Many artists that came after the Renaissance, such as Eugene Delacroix, Johannes Vermeer, Lyubov Popova, Piet Mondrian, Wassily Kandinsky, Victor Vasarely, Bridget Riley, and Agnes Martin continued this exploration of geometric principles, not only in their compositions but as the content of the work itself.

My practical study of geometry begins in my drawing practice. I view drawing as a way of thinking and learning, in large part because of the precision and scale afforded through the medium. Another factor which relates a lot to my experience with painting, is the quality of attentiveness necessary to achieve it. Due to the specificity of scale, proportion, and line in my drawings, I automatically have to slow down my thinking and fully engage with each movement of the hand and positioning of the various tools utilized in the process.

The three main tools necessary to construct this level of accuracy are a compass, a right triangle, and a ruler. These analog tools are similar to ones that have been used for millennia. What is important to note is not just artists use these tools. They are the same tools that architects, engineers, mathematicians, and designers use as well. In today's world we have amazing technology that can do what these old analog tools can do at enormous speeds. At times I utilize auto-cad software or illustration software when necessary for laser cutting projects. However, the analog tools attract me more because of how much they slow me down

and keep me more cognizant of the moment. At times the computer software may skip steps along the way, which I feel may cause me to miss out on interesting moments in the process; moments that may yield something unexpected.

When looking at one of my drawings (**Figure 7**) one can easily notice the level of meticulousness needed. This is a drawing of an ancient geometric diagram called the Sri Yantra. This diagram depicts nine interlocking triangles, four of them upward facing and five of them downward facing. The triangles are arranged within a perfect circle; whose points coincide with specific places along the arc of that circle. The overlapping of each of these triangles in this particular manner yields forty-three other triangles, with creates 54 intersections, each one representing a syllable in the ancient Sanskrit language. The Sri Yantra is said to be the geometric representation of the most sacred seed mantra in Vedic cosmology, the AUM. The Aum is said to be the expression of every syllable in the Sanskrit language. What is so interesting is how this perfect geometric form of the Sri Yantra just so happens to create fifty-four junctures for each of these syllables, while still maintaining its perfect symmetry and perfect line intersections.



Figure 7. Sri Yantra, 2016 , prisma marker on BFK paper, 22" x 30"

Many cultures throughout time have used geometric forms as a method for disseminating cultural and mythological information, as well as the basis for the construction of sacred sites and symbols. For example, the great pyramids of Giza display an unprecedented accuracy in their geometric proportions as related to the phi ratio and astronomy. Not only were these pyramids mathematically perfect, but "The Egyptian pyramids are precisely oriented to cardinal points."⁴ In the Vedic culture of India, specific geometric forms called Yantras were used as centering devices. "As a tool, yantra is used to withdraw consciousness from the outer

⁴ French. p.62.

world and direct it to the inner world, so as to help the sadhak go beyond the normal framework of the mind to the altered state of consciousness known as turiya.”⁵ This is a great example of geometry being used to affect consciousness.

What attracted me to the study of yantras was not only the precise understanding of geometry, but the symbolic and practical use of them. Part of my interest and aim as an artist is connecting not only myself, but helping facilitate other people’s connection to this deeper level of conscious awareness. To be able to touch that place myself, and at the same time offer the opportunity for someone else to experience a deeper state of their own consciousness, is a large part of what drives the development of my artistic pursuits. I understand that this will not happen for everyone in a direct way, and I don’t determine the success or failure of a work based on how many do or don’t connect. My goal is for a work of art to connect with just one other person in this deeper way, I feel that if this happens then the work is successful. That being said, I feel my path as an artist will lead me to find better ways to facilitate this type of opening in consciousness to a broader range of people.

In my first light sculpture titled *Yantra* (**Figure 8**) I wanted to use some of the traditional imagery I was studying from Vedic culture to create a living experience of that form through the use of LED lights and sacred sounds. What resulted was an installation that allowed for people to dive into meditative states through the focusing of attention from the mandala form, and the engaging of the sensory systems through the sound and colored light. The light emerged from beneath each layer of shaped wood, stacked atop one another to create the Yantra.

⁵ Harish Johari. *Tools for Tantra*. Rochester, VT: Destiny, 1986. Print. p.45.

I was so grateful to be able to show this work at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art for their annual *Louisiana Contemporary* Exhibition in 2015. What I noticed from observing people interact with the piece, along with what others had told me about their experience, was that the work did draw people more inward. It allowed people to have a glimpse of the meditative state, which reinforces my own belief in the power of these forms.



Figure 8. *Yantra*, 2014, wood, paint, LED light, soundscape, 44" x 44" x 5"

Another theme present in a lot of my work is the use of symmetry. In the words of the Nobel prize-winning physicist, Frank Wilczek,

...the idea that there *is* symmetry at the root of nature has come to dominate our understanding of physical reality. The far-fetched idea that *symmetry dictates structure* – that one can use stringent requirements of mathematical perfection to converge on a small list of possible realizations, and then use that list as the construction manual for our world-model – has become, at the unmapped frontiers of the unknown, our guiding star. It is an idea almost blasphemous in its audacity, for it claims that we can decode

the Artisan's working methods, and suggests precisely how to do it. And, as we'll see it has turned out to be profoundly correct.⁶

For me, symmetry is not only beautiful and entrancing, it is mysterious and evokes states of deep contemplation. In Buddhist culture, the mandala, which is a radially symmetric form, is an extremely significant symbol for their cosmology as well as a tool much like the yantra. The harmony and balance coax the mind inward toward the center. The visual representation of this harmony through the mandala has been utilized for longer than we perhaps know. It both centers and expands the consciousness into new territory when the viewer is sincere and disciplined in their engagement.

One of my favorite contemporary artists that uses symmetry is the painter Kelsey Brookes, who is based out of San Diego. Although I haven't had the pleasure of experiencing one of his works in person, I view it from afar through the Internet. In his painting titled "Mean Ration, 2x" (**Figure 9**) he uses symmetry and the mean ratio as the guidelines that allow the painting to emerge. The use of vibrant color and organic wiggly traces of paint either descend down into the center or emerge from it. The quality of detail and the vibrancy of color, along with the use of these geometric principles, elevates the work for me and resonates with my own proclivities.

⁶ Frank Wilczek. *A Beautiful Question: Finding Nature's Deep Design*. New York: Penguin, 2015. Print. p.48.

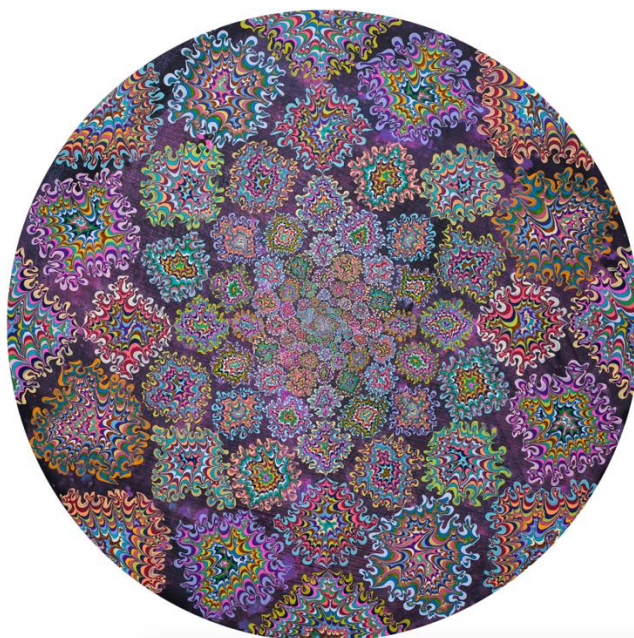


Figure 9. Kelsey Brookes, *Mean Ratio 2X*, 36" diameter

In my painting, titled *One Pointedness* (**Figure 10**) I use a similar radially symmetric composition. However, I simplify the composition to basic triangular wedges fashioned around the center, separated by nine degrees of the circle. I play with the movement of color again here, creating a play between each wedge, which allows for a dynamic sensation of movement around the center. The colors are saturated for the most part and are blended toward and away from each other, moving both outward and inward from the center. The resulting image creates optical sensations that draw the viewer toward the point of radiation at the very center of the composition. This allows for a heightened experience of one's own vision because of the playfulness in the apparent movement of juxtaposing color. This piece is intended to offer a moment of investigation by the viewer, to really pay attention to what is or isn't happening on the surface of the painting. This guides the observer to become more aware of the process of their own viewing.



Figure 10. One Pointedness, 2016, acrylic on panel, 40" x 40"

Circling back more specifically to the geometry, I found a great way to utilize shape in my work simply through the substrates themselves. In the past I would focus on creating geometric images on rectilinear panels. This made the paintings act in a more traditional way. However, once I started playing with shaped panels, the paintings became more object like, and it imbued them with more presence. This presence of the work is heightened because of the play with shadow and depth, inviting viewers to experience the work's three-dimensional quality, causing the painting to straddle a line between two and three dimensions. For me, this harkens back to my desire to occupy a middle ground between opposites. The object quality of the paintings also references minimalist artists such as Frank Stella and Ellsworth Kelley, while at the same time point toward something outside of the authoritarian rhetoric of

minimalism.⁷ I believe the cut panels in the context of my work points toward a personal self expression created by unique shapes derived from the same methodologies used to create precise geometric renderings.

The process for beginning one of these paintings starts with drawing. In a spirited and experimental approach, I use some of the same tools and procedures necessary to create known geometric expressions. For example, in this untitled drawing (**Figure 11**) geometric architecture is faintly present in the back ground. The circles extending out from the colored image are remnants of a dynamic gridding process created through the Flower of Life pattern.

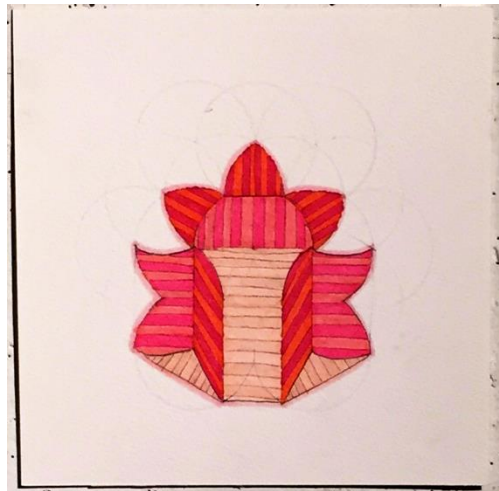


Figure 11. Study drawing, pencil, prisma marker, 8" x 8"

The Flower of life is a geometric shape composed of evenly spaced, overlapping circles, all with the same circumference, which grows into a six-fold hexagonal grid.

The Flower of life symbol represents important meaning to many throughout history. The symbol can be found in manuscripts, temples and art throughout cultures around the world...Leonardo da Vinci studied the flower of life's form and its mathematical properties. He drew the flower of life itself, as well as various components such as the Seed of Life. He drew geometric figures representing shapes such as the platonic solids,

⁷ Anna C. Chave. "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power." Arts Magazine, Vol. 64, no. 5, January 1990, pp. 44-63

a sphere, a torus, ect., and also used the golden ratio of phi in his artwork; all of which may be derived from the flower of life design.⁸

One of the many wonders of this architecture is the infinite potential it yields to create unique and expressive polygons and circular forms. The more I practice using this grid pattern the more comfortable I become in discovering new potential shapes, which is largely developed through my drawing practice. I find that these unique structures derived from a sense of playfulness and experimentation, express a more intuitive and personal touch on the universal language of geometry.

In the painting, *An Open Heart* (**Figure 12**), I created a unique shape from the flower of life that expressed symmetry in a way that was more dynamic compared to my use in the past. The shape has both straight edges and curves that are in alignment with the Pi ratio. Also the panel has a cut out in the very center of the piece which connotes emptiness or void, and at the same time exposes a new space to become a part of the work. The opening in the center brings the painting closer to an object than just a two dimensional representation of something. For me this allows the painting to occupy a position that doesn't merely represent something, but in fact *is* something.

⁸ David Wilcock. "Flower of Life - A Thorough Explanation." *Token Rock*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Feb. 2017.



Figure 12. *An Open Heart*, 2016, acrylic on shaped panel, 47" x 52"

As compared to my paintings in the past which acted more like images to be interpreted, these works serve the purpose of becoming objects to be observed. This difference between interpretation and observation is a key one in the development of my work. This is because my interests are moving further away from engaging the viewer through their intellect, and more toward engaging with the viewer through their senses, through the phenomenology of one's relationship to the present moment.

The Cradle (**Figure 13**), which consists of four oblong panels stacked atop one another, each one in descending scale and proportion, is another example of how the geometry of the shaped panels become more like objects to be experienced. The presence of this particular piece reinforces my intention of the work being less about meaning something, and more about being something. My goal is for the viewer to seek the experience of what the work is, rather

than what it means. I believe this invites the viewer to be more present with their bodies and their senses, more attentive to what is in front of them. I feel that taking the geometry out of a flat representation and into the shape of the surface itself to be a key factor in aligning the work more closely with my intentions as an artist; which is to inspire more awareness of one's moment to moment experience.



Figure 13. The Cradle, 2016, acrylic on multiple shaped panels, 38" x 46"

Paradox and Meta-Modernism

There have been a number of western artists who have expressed themselves through geometry both in the content of what they painted as well as through the use of shaped substrates. This push into geometry began with the modernist movements in Europe. The modernist ideal sought a utopian vision for the future, and many felt that because of the universality of geometry that it was the perfect language to express what this vision could look like. Many artists from the Bauhaus movement followed geometric principles through their work as a method for generating a new aesthetic, and in a large way they achieved this. What is interesting to note is how the Minimalist artist of the sixties and seventies used geometry in a less personal way than artist's such as Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, or Paul Klee.

Many artists, such as Frank Stella, Ellsworth Kelley, and Kenneth Noland used geometry to create more object like work as a form of rejection of the modernist, especially the abstract expressionist. They sought to eliminate the emphasis or necessity of the artist as individual and focused solely on the objective quality of art itself. Many view the minimalist movement as the bridge that led toward the Post-Modern because they wanted to minimize the subjectivity and strip away the mystique and supposed genius of the individual. In Hal Foster's essay, *The Crux of Minimalism*, he states, " In this genealogy Minimalism will figure not as a distant dead end but as a contemporary crux, a paradigm shift toward toward Postmodernist practices..."⁹

When I consider the concerns of the early Modernist versus the Minimalist and Post-Modern artists, I find my own point of view floating between both. In an almost paradoxical

⁹ Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century*, MIT Press, 1996, p36

manner, I acknowledge both perspectives as true, however the grayness that emerges is hard to describe. In Buddhist philosophy there is a discussion about the importance of both relative truth and absolute truth. Relative truth relates to the experience of the individual, the unremitting reality of change, along with the subjectivity and the circumstance that allow for unique expressions to unfold within the human experience. The notion of absolute truth, points toward a universal ground, or underlying field of consciousness, which is changeless and eternal, similar to what modern day physicists discuss as the quantum field, or the unified field theory. Both relative and absolute truth are considered equally important from the Buddhist point of view. However, this paradoxical situation, according to Buddhist philosophy, must be approached with a mentality of non-attachment to either. To accept the existence of both and cultivate Upaya, which translates as skillful means, is fundamental in order to know how to act within the spectrum of life. One of the greatest teachings to emerge from this philosophy is that of the middle way, the path between opposites. In the words of the great Advaita mystic, Sri Nassarga Data, "Wisdom tells me I am nothing. Love tells me I am everything. And between the two, my life flows."¹⁰ Flowing between these two banks of the river is how I try and approach my life as well as my art.

From my perspective, we still appear to be wrestling with the effects of Post-Modernism, which doesn't hold up against the reality that our technologies, such as the internet, smart phones and social media, have created for the contemporary world. This notion

¹⁰ Joel And Michelle Levey. "Reflections on Wisdom, Wellness, and Wholeness." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, n.d. Web. 03 Feb. 2017.

of meta-modernism, which was actually coined in 1975 by Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, oddly enough appears to describe the reality of what our post-internet and information age is grappling with.

The internet, by comparison, is a strange mix of distance and closeness, detachment and immediacy – our sense of ourselves and strangers' varying senses of us...Metamodernism seeks to collapse distances, especially the distance between things that seem to be opposites, to recreate a sense of wholeness that allows us to – in the lay sense – transcend our environment and move forward with the aim of creating positive change in our communities and the world.¹¹

This experience of paradox, in my view, is best dealt with through intuition and from a deeper vantage point of our consciousness. The practice of mindfulness and the cultivation of a greater awareness of consciousness helps bridge this gap between opposites. I feel that art is an effective way to illustrate and facilitate what that experience looks and feels like, both for the maker and viewer alike. From my own experience, once I get a taste of that understanding it stirs something deep within me. When I think about the intentions and aims of my art practice, the above description of meta-modernism hits the nail on the head, and my only desire for the viewer is to perhaps get a taste of what this deeper awareness is.

¹¹ Seth Abramson. "Metamodernism: The Basics." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, n.d. Web. 03 Feb. 2017.

Perception and Beginners Mind

Awareness is a tricky subject with a slippery slope. What constitutes awareness, is it a sense of me or “I” ness in relation to an external situation? Who or what is aware? Can awareness expand and deepen, or does it always stay the same? Is it related to observation, sensation, or feeling? Where does awareness begin? Is it with the senses or does it exist outside of the senses? Is awareness the same from person to person? Is the color red I see, the same color red you see? These are questions I have been asking myself since I was a little kid. I was always so curious about my experience in relation to someone else’s. It is of no surprise that to this day I am still interested in how we perceive both individually and collectively.

I find that these are important questions and yet the lack of concrete answers makes a lot of us feel uneasy. I don’t have much of an answer to these questions myself, however there are ways to explore the ideas internally and subjectively. Buddhist meditation practices aim for this communion with the ground of awareness, to strip away all impediments toward experiencing life with a clear and open mind.

Part of the practices deal with the notion of a witness beyond the awareness, stepping back to a place where one can become aware of awareness itself. This sharpening of our attention over time gives us the possibility to penetrate the moment into its full richness. I understand not every one would take the time to develop this ability, however I find that even the smallest taste of what that experience is can have ripple effects that last. A glimpse into this state may provide a refuge from the melodrama of our own lives. In my experience it reveals a space deep within myself that transcends the attachments to my suffering and my identity as I know it.

The attachments I have to the concepts and stories that have been given to me by my family and friends, by my education and by my culture, ultimately traps me in an exhausting self-centeredness. What I have been told about myself plays a large part in how I have constructed my identity.

As a child I was told, “you have beautiful eyes,” “you are great at drawing sharks,” “You can’t read very well,” or, “You’re not able to do that because this is what *you’re* supposed to do.” These influences created an idea about myself that I accepted as the truth. In this sort of process, I began to construct ideas about who I am based on what people or what society told me. Alan Watts describes this same problem in his seminal book, *The Book on the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*, when he states, “We seldom realize, for example that our most private thoughts and emotions are not actually our own. For we think in terms of languages and images which we did not invent, but which were given to us by our society.”¹² In this same way I began to realize how my own understanding of who I think I am is based upon all the concepts and ideas that have been given to me from the external sources I mentioned.

As a result of illness and depression, these models which I held so strongly began to fall apart. What I realized is how much I relied on these ideas about myself, which weren’t necessarily my own, and when those began to crumble, I had nothing, no ground to stand on. This experience led me to find new ways of understanding my self, not based on an externalized notion, but rather an internalized one.

¹² Alan Watts. *The Book; on the Taboo against Knowing Who You Are*. New York: Pantheon, 1966. Print. p.54.

The process of looking within, through practices like meditation, are all about stripping away the content which has been given to us and is all about uncovering what has been and will always be at the core of who we are. Like an onion we peel back all the unnecessary layers of our identity, until we reach a place of essence, an emptiness full of purpose, a place beyond identification. The only way I can describe it is pure unfiltered awareness. It is like a hyper-lucid sense of being that is fully present and fully at ease. This state of consciousness is empty of concepts as we know them intellectually, and full of a simple understanding, an almost primordial state, full of compassion, peace, and bliss.

It is through this subtractive process that we can touch an essential reality from which we can cultivate what Suzuki Roshi called “beginner’s mind”. To clean the slate of our awareness in each moment, so that we can take in everything with fresh eyes, as if we are seeing and feeling our moment to moment experience for the first time. In the words of Suzuki Roshi, ““In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s there are few.”¹³ This quality of openness to the many possibilities is a large part of what my art practice hopes to develop. I view this procedure that takes place in a meditation practice and the beginner’s mindset, as a method which can be implemented through the creative act.

The way I approach it in my practice is to strip away imagery and touch upon the essence of phenomena which stems from shape, value, color, and line. Not only do I cultivate the attitude of beginner’s mind when creating the work, but I intend for the work itself to evoke

¹³ Suzuki, Shunryo, and Trudy Dixon. *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. New York: Walker/Weatherhill, 1970. Print.

a similar quality of expansiveness for each individual viewer; to give them a sense of possibility and freedom.

What I noticed from this distillation is that I was able to evoke subtle optical sensations. These impressions highlighted my awareness and connected me more deeply with the mind-body system that grounds my awareness in experience. This became a path for me to discover how this process can lead to paintings that have the potential to connect people back with the mystery of their own perception through the playfulness of subtle optical effects.

Op-Art and Color Theory

There was an entire movement in Art in the 1960's which focused on heightened and exaggerated optical experience. One of my favorite Op artists during this time is Richard Anuszkiewicz. When I was in Houston I came across one of his paintings (**Figure 14**) in a gallery and was immediately transfixed by the phenomena of energy and movement emanating from them. The simplicity of color, form and the precision of its execution, hypnotized me into a trance where I became enraptured with the experience of my own awareness. For some, this type of work can be too intense and cause adverse bodily responses, and many of the Op artists works do this to me. I felt with Anuszkiewicz's piece that there was a nice balance with the optical effects which allowed me to stay longer with them.

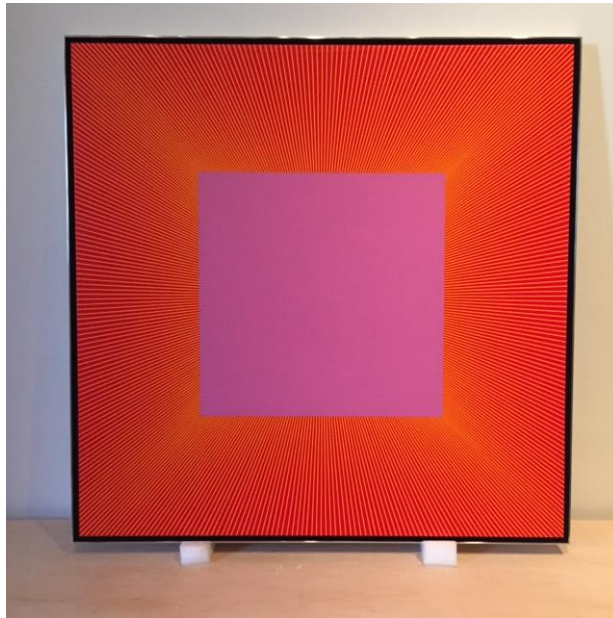


Figure 14. Richard Anuszkiewicz, *Centered Square, Red Pink 1055*, 1978-2005, 48" x 48"

When I think about my own paintings, I intend to find a subtle optical effect that won't overwhelm the viewer but will on the contrary draw the viewer in more closely. I hope for the subtle properties to give the viewer something to investigate visually, to keep their attention, and expand their awareness through the interplay of reality and illusion. In the painting, *The Watercourse Way* (**Figure 15**), there is a lightheartedness with the shifting values of color that create a sensation of both depth and movement. Through the juxtaposition of vertical and horizontal lines, along with the use of opposing value shifts, there develops a sense of dynamic movement both on the horizontal and vertical axis. The painting feels like I am observing a living scene, a scene on the verge of recognition but yet still completely non-objective because there is no clear indication of anything beyond line and color.



Figure 15. *The Watercourse Way*, 2016, acrylic on wood panel, 13" x 13" x 3"

Color is one of the most important components that allows for these optical effects and at the same time evokes emotionality and self expression. I have always been absorbed by color; ever since I was young, my artwork always hinged upon it. As my experience has increased I have become more and more fascinated with the nuances of color relationships and their ability to evoke sensations of light, rhythmic movement, and deep emotional resonance. When contemplating the theories of how colors interact with each other, one can't help but refer to Joseph Albers and the intense amount of study he underwent in discovering the relativity of color itself. In his words, "Colors present themselves in continuous flux, constantly related to changing neighbors and changing conditions."¹⁴ This relative nature of color provides a landscape of limitless possibilities with what colors can do to our visual perception. The experimental nature of color mixing has become a major focus in my painting process. I find the constant discovery of new color relationships to be both inspiring and intriguing.

When I am mixing paint and intuitively responding to varying color relationships, I love to develop my own personal theories about how colors relate to each other. I love to contemplate the micro-cosmic structure of the pigments and how those structures are altered through mixing. Most people are unaware of the variability within a given paint mixture in relation to its molecular structure. Although the color may be received in the same way visually, the reality of how that color presents itself is highly nuanced and specific to each particular mixture. One of the ways I think about color from painting to painting is the molecular resonance of all the different hues presented on a particular surface.

¹⁴ Josef Albers. *Interaction of Color*. New York: Yale UP, 1975. Print. p.5.

What I refer to as “the genealogy of color” is the notion of how to shift between a dynamic array of hues dealt within a particular color scheme. For example, when looking at the painting titled *Emptiness* (**Figure 16**), one sees a large variety of values and hues of green. Aside from the play of warm and cool, I want to focus on how I mix all the particular variations of green displayed in this piece and how this process works. The paintings always start with a single hue, which I would consider the parent hue for all the other colors within the work. This particular mixture of paint has a specific molecular structure, in terms of its pigment, which yields a precise array of wave lengths. If the paint is a mixture of hansa yellow, cobalt blue, a small bit of anthraquinone blue, with a bit of titanium white; this mixture yields a very particular quality of green. I will push that green to a warmer green, which will then be pushed further to a more yellow green. Each time there is a new mixture I will keep pushing that mixture into new values and hues of green, spanning from warm to cool. Within each subsequent mixture exists an evolving chemistry of the paint which still includes the other mixtures, all the way back to the original parent, as opposed to making brand new mixtures for each color.



Figure 16. Emptiness, 2016, acrylic on shaped panel, 70" x 41"

I find that this pushing of color across the warm and cool spectrums and across the color spectrum, on some level creates a greater harmony amongst all the hues and values present in the work. Although it is subtle and not detectable directly by the eye, the fact that it is present in the molecular structure of each stroke of paint is enough. Just like human genealogy, within each of us is a long history of traits held within our DNA, whether those traits are active and visible is irrelevant to the fact that it is fundamental to our existence, that our DNA is a product of all the relationships that came before us.

As far out as this may seem, or silly of a notion, I love the fact that I can think in these terms when it comes to paint. When dealing with color relationships, playing with harmony is important to me, and whether the harmony is present from viewer to viewer is subjective to degrees, but knowing that down in the depth of the paints structure there is a seed of

harmony, by virtue of how I mix paint, is enough for me to know that something interesting with color is happening before my eyes, whether I am aware of it or not.

This level of acuity when it comes to color varies from person to person, and the experience of color, in terms of paint, can be subtle and highly personal. For myself, when I experience certain relationships of color, I not only have responses in my visual perception, but I feel these colors in my body. Perhaps because I spend so much time with the colors, working with them, and meditating upon them that this experience comes more naturally. However, what I love about color when it comes to the light sculptures is how instantaneous these physical responses are for a wider range of people.

The major difference to note between color experienced through paint as opposed to color experienced through light, is the reflective quality versus the direct quality. When experiencing a painting, we are getting all reflecting light waves off the pigment back into our eyes. The strength and clarity of those waves are based on the quality of the light source that hits the surface of the painting. When experiencing color through light, we receive it directly from its power source. This intensifies our experience with color and allows for a more instantaneous response.

Circling back to this discussion of contemporary technology in relation to our attention spans, the colored light gives us more of the instant gratification we appear to be accustomed to, whereas the paintings in some cases require more attention and patience. This dichotomy between instant gratification and patience is part of the dialogue present within the work I am doing. And color becomes an aspect within this discussion that can be experienced in a way that draws our attention to our lack of attention.

What I find helps in the mediation of color is the form which contains it. There is an intrinsic relationship between form and color; which has a lot to do with what I am exploring more through my work with geometry, color theory, and perception. As Kandinsky points out in his seminal essay, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*:

It is evident that many colours are hampered and even nullified in effect by many forms. On the whole, keen colours are well suited by sharp forms (e.g. a yellow triangle), and soft, deep colours by round forms (e.g. a blue circle). But it must be remembered that an unsuitable combination of form and colour is not necessarily discordant, but may, with manipulation, show the way to fresh possibilities of harmony. Since colours and forms are well-nigh innumerable, their combination and their influences are likewise unending. The material is inexhaustible.¹⁵

This exploration of harmony and the innumerable possibilities that Kandinsky discusses is what drives the direction of my work; to seek all the ways in which harmony can present it self, to uncover the dynamic and living quality that harmony as a concept posses and to strive toward both a personal and universal expression of what that discovery is like. This is part of my mission and intention as an artist. For me the only way to engage this form of exploration is through the cultivation of the beginner's mind; to constantly reset what I think I know about color and form so that I may discover something new at any turn.

¹⁵ Kandinsky, Wassily. *Concerning The Spiritual In Art*. London: Dover, 1977. P.29.

Conclusion

The more I contemplate my work, the more I realize how many layers there are to it, some of which were unintended in the beginning, and some of which have yet to be uncovered. However, the foundation of my process rests upon a bedrock of mindfulness and meditation practice. My interests are driven by my curiosity, which explores the relationship between consciousness, spirituality, and living in a digital and virtual age. Through art, I aim to bridge gaps and draw connections between the paradox latent in my own dualistic thinking. I choose to do this by sincerely working on creating these connections for myself, by letting go of cultural models and stripping away distractions. Through my process I constantly seek to create and explore refined ways of how the art experience can elevate my own consciousness. I personally feel that that this elevation of consciousness takes place when I start to re-learn how to use my awareness in more skillful ways. This re-learning, or beginners mind, may reveal some step I may have missed along the way, or help me uncover what the next step may be, by revealing the power my attention has to transform my relationship to each instant.

The work that I create strips away what I regard as unnecessary elements, focusing solely on the basic components of visual language, which for me creates sensations of light, movement, and spaciousness. Something about playing with the effects of light through the elegance and simplicity of the gradient, opens up an experimental quality that keeps me excited about how the work can evolve.

I find that when I keep the variables limited to their most basic states, I can explore in a more focused way. What can be done with just shape and color? How can art act like a mirror of sorts for one's mind? Maybe it's more like a meeting of minds, where the artwork becomes a

representation of a state of mind as well as a door into that state. Possibly that energy connects with your energy, and through that meeting they witness each other, and that's where the art happens. Perhaps it is like a recognition, a subtle intuitive communication happening. Whatever art is, I devote my sincere attention to this work because I believe it promotes a creative, peaceful, and compassionate mind, not only for myself, but for potentially anyone.

In my experience with certain artworks the connection feels most akin to empathy, full of richness, emotion and depth, co-created by both the doer and the viewer. From my point of view, art is an occurrence sparked by the synchronicity of intention and reception. Once these two subjective and mysterious forces align, the magic I feel is what art appears to be. This experience unlocks a way to connect more directly with each other on both the collective and individual levels. I value the notion that the most important quality of art is that it is boundless and ungraspable by the logical mind alone. What drives me to continue this work is the belief that art has the ability to introduce us to what it is like for both parts of our mind to work together, to experience the mind whole again, if only for a moment.

Bibliography

Abramson, Seth. "Metamodernism: The Basics." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, n.d. Web. 03 Feb. 2017.

Albers, Josef. *Interaction of Color*. New York: Yale UP, 1975. Print.

Arnheim, Rudolf. *The Power of the Center: A Study of Composition in the Visual Arts*. Berkeley: U of California, 1982. Print.

Baas, Jacquelynn, and Mary Jane Jacob. *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*. Berkeley (Calif.): U of California, 2004. Print.

Campbell, Joseph, and David Kudler. *Myths of Light: Eastern Metaphors of the Eternal*. Novato, CA: New World Library, 2003. Print.

Capra, Fritjof. *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*. Berkeley: Shambhala, 1975. Print.

Chave, Anna C. "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power." *Arts Magazine*, Vol. 64, no. 5, January 1990, Print.

Foster, Hal. *"The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century."* MIT Press, 1996, Print.

French, K. L. *The Hidden Geometry of Life: The Science and Spirituality of Nature*. London: Watkins, 2012. Print.

Johari, Harish. *Tools for Tantra*. Rochester, VT: Destiny, 1986. Print.

Jung, C. G., and Marie-Luise Von Franz. *Man and His Symbols*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964. Print.

Kandinsky, Wassily. *Concerning The Spiritual In Art*. London: Dover, 1977.

Lawlor, Robert. *Sacred Geometry: Philosophy and Practice*. New York: Crossroad, 1982. Print.

Levey, Joel And Michelle. "Reflections on Wisdom, Wellness, and Wholeness." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, n.d. Web. 03 Feb. 2017.

Melchizedek, Drunvalo. *The Ancient Secret of the Flower of Life*. N.p.: Light Technology Pub, 2000. Print.

Roob, Alexander. *Alchemy & Mysticism: The Hermetic Museum*. Köln: Taschen, 1997. Print

Rothko, Mark, and Miguel Lapez-Remiro. *Writings on Art*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2006. Print.

Smith, Chuck. *Interview With Agnes Martin*. <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/agnesmartin>. N.p., 3 Feb. 2016. Web. 21 Jan. 2017.

Suzuki, Shunryo, and Trudy Dixon. *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. New York: Walker/Weatherhill, 1970. Print.

Trungpa, Chögyam, and Judith L. Lief. *Dharma Art*. Boston: Shambhala, 1996. Print.

Watts, Alan. *The Book; on the Taboo against Knowing Who You Are*. New York: Pantheon, 1966. Print.

Wilcock, David. "Flower of Life - A Thorough Explanation." *Token Rock*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Feb. 2017.

Wilczek, Frank. *A Beautiful Question: Finding Nature's Deep Design*. New York: Penguin, 2015. Print.

Vita

Martin L. Benson is a New Orleans-based painter, sculptor and installation artist. Martin was born in Georgia, raised in Kentucky, and received his B.A. in Studio Art at the University of Southern California. Upon graduation in 2010, Martin moved to New Orleans with his Wife to begin a studio practice. Over the 7years he has been working in New Orleans he has been shown at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans, the New Orleans Museum of Art, and the Jazz and Heritage Foundation. Martin is currently working toward his MFA at the University of New Orleans, for which he was awarded the UNO Fine Arts Achievement Scholarship and Graduate Assistantship. Martin was commissioned by the New Orleans Arts Council in 2016 to create a site specific art installation for the annual light and art festival, Luna Fete. Martin also works as a Yoga and Meditation teacher at Wild Lotus Yoga. His work is held in numerous private and public collections across the country, including the newly built University Hospital, who purchased six of Martin's large scale paintings to be on permanent display.