

## Forces and Fictions

Beginning with drawing: establishing a subject matter – building a methodology that provides a way to work. Creating a pictorial language, in turn generating other shapes & forms. Using drawing to combine & synthesize different visual elements. Creating an analogous chain of connections.

Allowing each stage of the painting to exist simultaneously—to build in an additive way.

Visual appearance a starting point. Create a painting that is about becoming, rather than about being.

Engaging the forces that shape the world — mapping the visual dynamics in nature, depicting not just observation, but visual thinking.

Optical technologies, computers, hyperspace, airport hubs, the internet: the “new” space we are coming to know – using these new modes as motifs for art—as photography, collage & cinema were used in the early 20th century.

Unconventional uses of conventional tools: employing traditional pictorial means such as illusionism or shading, stripped of habitual usage: allow for slippages of meaning. Taking the terms of abstract painting & placing them under the stresses of contemporary conditions.

The unique signature of each element. A presentation of ideas & concepts, not as a surrealist landscape, or Jungian convoluted, or Greenbergian formalism, rather the components themselves, presented directly, as a new assemblage.

How to keep making a thing, and figuring new ways of doing it? Invent, test and play.

Working in a borrowed studio on the Bowery, circa 1978, one floor below Ornette Coleman: a daily lesson in the Absolute. How to capture in paint this sound? – emotional, advanced, abstract. Through a commitment to one’s instrument, through improvisation, and through direct expression and primacy of emotion. Not the intellectual content of paintings, but how one is grabbed by them.

Knots & Loops: circular reflexes that allow for feedback. Incoming data, outgoing responses (no loose ends). Linking internal and external processes. In perception, taking nothing for granted. Mapping more than traditional spatial directions (left/right, up/down): what is the space of the brain? What is imagined space?

Waves. Network maps. The order, pattern & structure of what is being observed. Points of contact with one’s environment. Explicate scientific modes on an aesthetic level, for a different purpose: to hone immediate perception.

Understanding the chemistry of color. Every color a different material with its own chemical and physical properties—with the capacity to open up hidden meanings in the forms. Allowing the color to effect the application of paint.

Building a painting like the false color maps in astrophysics: hydrogen green, sulphur red, oxygen blue: make a three-color composite by stacking the films in order to give a readable image. A pictorial fiction (but a consistent one).

Vernacular architecture: construction based on local conditions – an archetypal sense of design. To become a product of utility.

The Harmolodics of Ornette Coleman: an interactive field of musical forces outside of traditional structures and meter, determined by the flow of energy between the musicians themselves. Melody may become harmony and harmony may become melody. The aggregate becomes a simultaneous “image” of space as well as time. The music of Sun Ra: the artist in a science fiction world.

Sound as the universal principle. Acoustic space as opposed to visual space (no fixed points). The Doppler Effect (relative positions of observer and observed). Painting auditory space.

A remote corner of the New Mexico desert, one hundred and fifty miles southwest of Albuquerque. Assisting in the construction of Walter De Maria's *The Lightning Field*. A force field spanning the range of visible/invisible. How to connect painting to this space, both actual and virtual?

Align painting to the same processes that shape the world of natural forms, rendered with precision and austerity, rooted in investigative thought. Painting after minimalism and conceptualism.

Signal to Noise, 2006: an attempt to incorporate the atmospheric effects of Rothko, or the catastrophic weather in Turner. Watching these conditions unfold, and internalizing them as part of the work. A plein air painting of the mind.

The cosmic scope of Pollock's work, emerging from Navaho sand paintings in Arizona, circa 1920s: observations of earth and sky by a desert people. A physical field, a field of action. Escaping reductive thought. To extend the implied space in Pollock.

Charles Olson's open field: an energized ground capable of receiving all of the complexities the poet chooses to project upon it: history, archaeology, geography, linguistics...

Leaving open spaces, to invite the unexpected into a work of art.

The ecology of a work of art, reflecting an awareness of the interactions and interdependency of parts to the whole as they exist within a natural system, as opposed to hierarchies determined by cultural values (inherited from the nineteenth century). “The transformation of nature into art” (Coomaraswamy). Reordering the relationship between elements within a composition, and the general relationship of a composition to its environment. The example of John Cage: Giving up control.

“Indeterminacy” of Cage (“oceans of possibilities”). The multiplicity of realities and potentials at any given moment. Every mark or note is its own center. The qualities of perception arising from attunement to the moment.

Indeterminacy in science: the inability to completely describe any state in its entirety. Indeterminate perception in Buddhism: the direct apprehension of a thing, prior to the moment when the mind gives that thing its name – Unity of perceiver and perceived.

D'Arcy Thompson's *On Growth and Form*, 1917: its importance to the Abstract Expressionists. Early studies of Natural History illustrators. Ernst Haeckel's *Kunstformen der Natur*, 1899-1904. Plants, shells, algae, minerals, fungi. Curiosity cabinets. Remarkable phenomena presented in a deadpan way. Mathematical constructions morphing into strange beings. Emphasize the notational aspect – a use value, outside the realm of aesthetics.

Visual meditations on the Linnaean world of plant sexuality and generative growth. The scope from micro to macro, & the eerie similarities between opposite worlds. Forms and structures slowly assert themselves, as the specific terms fall away. In this awareness lies the seed of abstract art.

The example of Twombly: a way back into painting, circa 1970s. Painting out of painting, connected to the history of art & the ongoing conversation with European modernism, stripped of matters of decorum & good taste. Putting the physical touch back into painting.

The thermal motion of gases. Cloud structures. Laws of chance. Chaos theory. Alchemical elements. The transformation of a substance from one physical form to another, i.e. water to vapor. Duchamp's fascination with gas, the least stable of elements. A volatile and indeterminate state — fluid dynamics, the waterfall.

William Burroughs: "I want to get the paintings to move." Motion, not merely velocity: transformation, internal and external. (Atomic motions, electronic & nucleic motions, field motions, quantum fluctuations...) All things are animated, not still. To paint the forces that make up the world. "Moving visual thinking" (Brakhage).

The interactive nature of perception (with emotions, memories, reasoning, the unconscious...) Painting: embodiment of consciousness. Locating consciousness and perception in bodily states. Painting as a blueprint for living: seeing, knowing, understanding and acting in the world. Satisfying the necessity for ambiguity – holding two opposing ideas in the mind. The felt connections, not measurable.

Convergences between different mapping systems (auditory, spatial, visual, etc.) yet not relying on mechanical means. Painting as corporeal engagement with the outside.

Capture a sense of déjà vu by mapping patterning systems mirrored in the brain. Seeking tribal/ancestral connections, constructed from our culture: making it out of the stuff of here and now, & giving it all a mythological dimension. McLuhan's remark on Finnegans Wake: "the return of the tribal cycle for electronic man."

Pictures of the Third Mind. Burroughs & Gysin: the crucial aesthetic in these works. Raid the Reality Studio: re-cut the film. Ninety percent of the world is unseen and unknown. We are only working with ten percent. How to increase that percentage? It is the unseen and unconscious materials & information that we need to map and build.

What is the dream space of a picture?

Merging animism and abstraction. Fabricating an image out of this world that will take on a life of its own. Figures and faces emerging from unpredictable psychic realms. Images that have powers, from Bosch to Redon's dark visions of science, or Ensor's masks, floating just above the surface. The embedded optics of the Burroughs/Gysin Dream Machine.

What is it that wants to emerge—the figural? Not resisting—following the image where it will go (these are beings)—archaic forms appear, and the painting becomes a mediator between two worlds.

Molecular image or totemic godhead?

To arrive at the creation of a primitive object.

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