

vaste et évident mind way shin dao

suschnee bryan mulvihill

May 2 – June 6, 2015

suschnee and bryan mulvihill dedicate this exhibition to the memory of Daniel Dion, our dear friend and collaborator. It was with Daniel's enthusiasm and insistence that we proposed to show together at OBORO. He had said he would join us as curator.

Over years of ongoing conversation we discussed ways in which art making could be of benefit to others. It always came back to the motivation, the state of mind that is applied to the act of making. Ultimately it is the mind that makes and experiences a work of art. Thus the exhibition is named *vaste et évident – mind way – shin dao*.

suschnee's *Diamond in the Rose* series and her *Cloud Journal* and bryan mulvihill's "calligraphiti" are ongoing projects that explore the nature of the mind. Not the thinking, remembering, feeling, impressionistic mind, but the fundamental cognitive awareness mind. The works attempt to reveal or provide an experience of this basic awareness mind, like the moon reflected in a pail of water.

These works owe deep debts to contemporary art movements, particularly the bodies of work that emerged independently in many countries and cultures in the later twentieth century which concerned, in the words of the art historian Guy Brett, "cosmic speculation",¹ the connection between writing and painting in the creation of the sign. Many of these works could be read as "models of the universe," which come out of a conscious search by the artists. As the Venezuelan artist Jesus Rafael Soto puts it, as a "wish to discover the principle which governs the picture and the general law of the universe which governs everything."²

It has long been claimed in Japanese tea ceremony traditions that if such works were displayed in the tearoom tokonoma, a sacred space in which items for artistic appreciation are presented, they would have a calming affect on the guests. Recently, with the development of electronic microscopes, there has been extensive study of Zen paintings, works from both historical periods and present day practitioners. In the works created by a person engaged in disciplines of extensive mind training, the pigment particles were found aligned on the painting surface similar to iron filings in

a magnetic field. Whereas in the works not made under the meditative focus, the ink particles were found randomly attached to the paper or painting surface. Our state of mind does influence the world around us, both on a physical and, hopefully, societal level.

Ongoing developments in neuroscience show laboratory evidence that a continued engagement with an open cognitive awareness mind or “mindfulness training,” a term often used, has direct benefits to one’s health and sense of well-being. Synchronization of brain activity is dramatically increased in meditative states of mind. Employing technically demanding art making processes forces one to focus a clear attentive mind to the making itself, and this is an essential part of their method of realization.

The goal of these works of art is that they can be used as inspirational tools to focus, calm and clear the mind by addressing the visual cortex without delivering a specific message or engaging in the naming activity. As soon as the mind names a particular vision, it moves on to another function. Before works that are open-ended and yet visually absorbing, awareness goes into an open state of synchronization. In this state, brain synapses increase, blood pressure lowers, the immune system is stimulated, the heart rate normalizes while stress hormones decrease, giving rise to an overall sense of well-being, both physically and mentally.

suschnee’s *Diamond in the Rose* series is based on deep acts of seeing into the natural world reflected through long hours of detailed building up of layers of pigments. Her *Cloud Journal* is the quick capturing of a passing cloud, along with the flow of passing thoughts, with reflections, quotes and occurrences of time. In the case of the “calligraphiti,” it is words and language systems that are freed from their specific literal meaning to become open visual fields of repeated patterns. The absence of a specific reference point or ideational message allows access through experience rather than through limiting naming responses.

Both artists continue to explore techniques that attempt to engage the viewer in an open creativity of visual cognizance and awareness.

bryan mulvihill

1. Guy Brett, “Brion Gysin: Tuning into the Multimedia Age,” in *Gysin Known and Unknown*, (London, UK: Thames and Hudson, 2003), p. 52.
2. Jesus Rafael Soto, “Statements by Kinetic Artists,” *Studio International* 173, No. 886 (February 1967), p. 60.

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