

Conversations, "silent paintings"

Sunday, April 04, 2004

Contributors:

David Abram, author
Diane Elliot, movement artist
Ed Garman, painter
Amy Goldin, author
Cynthia Haney, painter
Donald Kuspit, art critic
Dan Landrum, painter
Doug Simay, curator

Dan Landrum: Sensibilities in a society increasingly bombarded with ever more intense stimuli ... do "silent paintings" need quiet minds to be seen (and appreciated)? Painting is, of course, a static medium to begin with, without the bells & whistles and passing time of the "moving pictures" found in cinema, theatre, or even poetry. By what means does a painting have to draw attention to itself, especially if void of the symbols and tantalizing figures of social/political/psychologically peopled dramas? Really none. The viewer must want to give her undivided attention freely to "silent paintings". Hence, this genre stays narrowly held by the self-selecting happy few and all but meaningless, if seen at all, by those not in the choir.

What is the enticement beyond the hope of a direct experience, possibly a heightened feeling, not readily available elsewhere? Perhaps the space to come back to one's Self -- whole, indefinable ... mysteriously exposed and dynamically developing. This may be a universal longing ... to come back to one's Self, to reconnect with one's true Spirit. If "silent painting" is indeed in the service, even for a minute few, of this rejoining, then its apparent meaninglessness has value.

Cynthia Haney: Meaningless-ness in painting is not the equivalent of insignificance.

Dan: Perhaps meaning is created in the connectedness of the intersubjective relations, such as this one. Maybe it is not fully understood by either you or I, but flourishing in the joint perspective of all who care to give this particular painting attention.

Lawrence Alloway: On meaning: "Meaning follows from the presence of the work of art, not from its capacity to signify absent events or values (a landscape, the Passion, or whatever). This does not mean we are faced with an art of nothingness or boredom as has been said with boring frequency. On the contrary, it suggests that the experience of meaning has to be sought in other ways."

Cynthia: I doubt that "silent painting" was ever in the ring to begin with, especially in the US where representation has typically held favor. Nevertheless, the tradition of non-objective/non-referential painting remains quietly active despite an admittedly smaller audience. How significant are sheer numbers, I wonder? (And is not the audience for every kind of art self-selected?)

Is the imageless-ness & meaningless-ness of a purist painting mere negativity and void, or is it a field opening into a heightened state of awareness and engagement? Agnes Pelton spoke of creating "points

of radiance," perhaps unwittingly echoing the term used by Joyce's alter-ego Stephen Daedalus in describing the three primary aesthetic categories: the kinetic (appealing to the base emotions, e.g. erotic, pornographic, violent); the didactic (promoting moral & social values); and the radiant, which characterizes the numinous thing-in-itself: a luminous, indefinable still-point. It is surely this quality of radiance that purist painting aspires to.

Such paintings draw their audience by their very silence: often they are exceedingly beautiful objects, if austere by usual standards of taste (e.g. Agnes Martin). It is curiously paradoxical how these supremely static objects nevertheless radiate an energy that is attractive & accessible to anyone who cares to engage them. I don't know if a "quiet mind" is a prerequisite -- perhaps in that moment of encounter, the mind is quieted? And while some may still attempt to attach various & sundry meanings to what they see -- from "seeing" quilt patterns to "recognizing" religious/esoteric symbols to "finding" therapeutic uses, the painting itself remains resolutely silent, free of limiting overlays of ideas & concepts which only serve to obscure its essential nature.

Doug Simay [Press Release for Double Joy]: Dan Landrum is a non-objective painter. His stretched canvas surfaces are treated with mis-treated acrylic paints that have been splashed, scratched, feathered and fingered. The paintings are flowing fields of color expression. The Abstract Expressionists painted about emotive states. Dan Landrum paints about states of consciousness. His paintings are Rorschach-equivalents. These paintings are not only beautiful to look at; they may be diagnostic. This is the first time Simayspace has shown this artist's work. The gallery is fortunate to be able to show work of such integrity.

Cynthia: Did Doug overstate the case, or is there an interpretive psychological use which you hope the paintings suggest?

Dan: No, I'm not hoping to suggest an interpretation, it's the direct experience I'm after. It's the odd duck who, like myself, can be satisfied with the immediate (and ongoingly immediate) direct experience of the visual experience alone. When confronting my paintings, the most often posed questions are "how", ones I don't answer. Questions that seem to come too soon in the get-acquainted-with-the-painting faze for my taste. Second most often seems to be finding things (a la Rorschach) and psychological interpretations. Here I tell people not to worry, "you'll sober-up".

Diane Elliot: I love the description of your work, but take exception with the wording. It seems to me that you don't "paint about" states of consciousness, you translate states of consciousness through paint onto canvas.

Dan: Actually, in my view, there is only one state of consciousness. I'm either conscious or I'm not, aware or unaware. Yes, there are perhaps an infinite variety of the qualities of my awareness ... and I don't feel it's just semantics, the difference between "states" and "qualities" of consciousness. It's important to me to try to call things by their true name, but common usage of words often leads me astray.

That delicious quality of my awareness of mind just as I drift into sleep is not semi-conscious. I'm fully conscious of it's "ah, perfect" quality, that's just what it is. And sleep itself is not unconscious, just because I don't use the part of my brain to store the memory of the experience doesn't mean I wasn't

consciously having the experience in the moment. Experience is its own reality. No, there is no semi-conscious, sub-conscious or unconsciously doing, there is only awareness. Yes, some more diffused, some more focused, but still simply awareness.

So, yes my paintings are artifacts of the qualities of my awareness, the sensations that stimulated this vehicle, the "boatman" psyche that steered me across the river of this instant to the next this instant ... the qualities distinct in the marriage between my perception of this inner and this outer world. No, these things of cotton, wood, mineral pigments bonded by acrylic plastic are not actually translations either, but rather the real McCoy, simultaneously documenting a moment of "danz dance with stuff" and living on, reverberating on in the presence of any open mind who cares to be involved.

Diane: Yes, I see what you mean. States are not qualities, and there do seem to be an infinite quantity of "flavors" or "qualities" of awareness (is "awareness" the same as "consciousness"?)

Dan: Hmmm, for me awareness is the big G ... it's all there actually is; consciousness is what I can perceive thru this neural, spinal, nervous system. But then that system has been the vehicle of all my experience, all the knowing I can remember and ultimately all the awareness I'm aware of. So it's hard for me to separate the two.

Diane: Yeah, that seems true ... and no, I don't think it's just semantics, and yes, that's the thing I hate about language, denotative language anyway, which tries to label, pin down and categorize instead of creating ripples of resonance (as poetic language does).

Dan: exactly

Diane: "Artifacts of the qualities of awareness... reverberating on in the presence of any open mind who cares to be involved..." I like that!! But do artifacts have the power to recreate a quality or perhaps stimulate new qualities in the partaker-viewer-experiencer?

Dan: hopefully

Diane: Maybe your paintings are power objects or totems or generators or signals!!

Dan: Perhaps.

In working thru the crisis Professor Jaroszynski's 'Metaphysics & Art' essay prompted in me, I found where my core understanding departs from much of Western thought. Beginning with the Greeks, thru Descarte to the Theosophical influence in both Mondrian & Kandinsky, I find there is an assumption that the material is in some way separate from the immaterial.

I personally can't find a notion that isn't brought to realization without a body. Perhaps it is a matter of scale, but there is no metaphysics without physics. Even the idea, lying as symbol, is dried ink on paper (or digital electrons on your monitor) is something. And when this something passes thru your senses it attaches itself, maybe to aggregate subatomics, maybe to orderly neuron brain cells, but again there is something to hold the thought. Thought is something, something tangible.

For the Greeks, ideas & spirits were immaterial. The Greeks didn't even entertain that "something" could be created from "nothing". My experiences sense that something and nothing are simultaneous,

or at least pulsating at such an astoundingly superfast nano-instant rate that I can only perceive a seamless continuity. No, I can not separate something from nothing. Nor can I, in fact, separate material from immaterial, flesh from Spirit. Here is where I part company with the Abstractionists & the Transcendentalists: I can't find anything to transcend. The sublime is within the mundane.

When the material and immaterial, the flesh & the Spirit, ... even something and nothing are embraced as part'n'parcel of the same "isness", then the polarization of abstracting the experience from the experiencer is not such a constructive model; a "spectrum understanding" is more useful.

I'm currently reading a book checked out of the public library, 'The Spell of the Sensuous -- Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World' by David Abram. It is itself a wonderful example of the kind of ecological spectrum sensing that I cotton to. In Abram's book there is a section on the advent of Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology, further expanded by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. A taste: "The pure 'objective reality' commonly assumed by modern science, far from being the concrete basis underlying all experience was, according to Husserl, a theoretical construction, an unwarranted idealization of intersubjective experience. Merleau-Ponty invites us to recognize, at the heart of even our most abstract cognition, the sensuous and sentient life of the body itself."

My effort is to make things to be experienced by other intersubjective sentient beings. Hopefully, a spider will find my paintings' surfaces as enthralling as an informed art viewer. Ultimately nothing is excluded from the conceptual range of my oeuvre. For now, I steer away from the titillations of social/political human dramas and forms, as I find them too attractive, too habituated within most viewers' psyches. They can see little else. I feel we need relief from the obsessions of the human-centric world to learn to sensitize to the nuance of the more-than-human world. Not that the kinetic or didactic couldn't be points of access, openings equally promising as the radiant. It simply appears to me that the radiant offers more surprising footing, as the road less traveled by.

Cynthia: In a metaphysical sense we may well entertain the notion of the underlying, absolute unity of being and nothingness, positive & negative; flesh & spirit, etc. -- yet in our daily living we do appear to function most efficiently within the sphere of duality: it may currently serve only a provisional function but it does give us a sense of coordinates; useful physical bearings for getting along in the world. Nine times out of ten, I'll bet you walk through that doorway rather than through the wall to get to the next room, despite our common understanding that All is in its deepest reality an undifferentiated, whirling array of dancing subatomic probabilities. Scale, or point of reference is key. Even your statement "The sublime is within the mundane" is expressed in dualistic terms, despite pointing to an unbroken unity. My feeling in the midst of these intriguing discussions is that our (well, to be honest, it does seem to be primarily a guy thang...) longing for a Unified Theory of Everything (with a wink to Douglas Adams!) inevitably runs into the raggedy, raggedy edge & falls into slight disconnect: we can almost grasp it, but it tantalizingly manages to elude capture, -or, if captured, changes into the next just-out-of-reach level. And that this may be built into the nature of our interplay with the universe.. Perhaps it is this very fundamental inability to achieve resolution that sparks our various forms of creativity & urges us ever onward into an as yet unformed & undreamed future.

To continue: I question whether thought is itself material: yes, ideas manifest themselves in the various ways enumerated above, but "manifest" is the key. Are you saying that unrealized thoughts, notions, ideas, fantasies, memories, dreams have a physical, tangible being?

I am intrigued by the phrase "spectrum understanding" and look forward to hearing more about it as the idea develops.

There is a book which you may already be familiar with: 'How the World Can Be The Way It Is: An Inquiry for the New Millennium in Science, Philosophy, and Perception' by Steve Hagen (Quest, 1995). In it he deals with an array of similar themes in a very cohesive, cogent manner. I intend to reread it soon, as I felt there was much to offer along these lines. Ed has given me a reading list, as well. Michael has tracked down a copy @ USD's library of 'The Rhetoric Of Purity' by Mark S. Cheetham; I'll attend to it once I finish my current reading: Richard Panek's 'Seeing & Believing: How the Telescope Opened Our Eyes And Minds to the Heavens'.

I gather you have been disappointed overall with the reactions in the wake of your recent exhibits -- is it a disappointment with the paintings themselves for failing to convey all you want them to, or is it in the lack of desired audience response? I don't know how you can possibly control the latter, aside from providing a synopsis of your stated intentions & desirable responses, which is in itself problematical (not to mention falling into the realm of didacticism). Is this something the painter should be overly concerning himself with? The question is, do the paintings convince you? If the problem lies in their format, then maybe these thoughts from the essay 'Patterns, Grids and Painting' by Amy Goldin may enlighten:

"I think it is impossible to respond simultaneously to a picture and a pattern because each evokes a different mode of perception and a different kind of aesthetic experience. Each engenders a specific kind of attention and particular sets of expectations. The sets are psychologically incompatible and the kinds structurally distinct. The fundamental structure of pattern is the grid; any pattern can be reduced to some grid. I suggest that grids and compositions are cues to different mobilizations of self. It may seem exceedingly magical to claim that in choosing one type of organization or another the artist establishes fundamental relationship to the viewer that no later artistic decision can abrogate. Yet we all learn to mobilize our attention in a variety of ways, and have undoubtedly learned how to respect and set aside the cues for various sorts of attending. This is true even though we may not be able to say exactly what those cues are.

Compositions breed involvement, intimacy, and references to self. Grids generate a greater emotional distance -- a sense of the presence of objective, pervasive law.

Most semidestroyed grids are pretty boring. Preserved grids, if the artist can hold you to them, are pretty interesting. Grid structures with submerged asymmetries, of the sort found in Near Eastern carpets and some Buddhist paintings, are notoriously aesthetically satisfying in a way that even good paintings are not. The enjoyment of patterns and grids, so often linked to religion, magic, and states of being not-quite-here, requires an indifference to self-assertion uncongenial to most Westerners. When I suggest that grids evoke the experience of law, I did not mean to speak metaphorically. It is one of our cultural quirks that we find law and creativity an odd pair. Charismatic personalities are another story -- we expect creativity from them. Our art history is the history of big artists, yet little artists, making small contributions to a collective articulation of form, embody an equally real creativity."

Lawrence Alloway: On 'systemic painting': "The artist who uses a given form begins each painting further along, deeper in the process, than an expressionist, who is, in theory at least, lost in each beginning; all the 'one image' artist has to have done is painted his earlier work."

Cynthia: This last statement may strike some as incredibly simple-minded, but I understand it to mean that the deeper work is not so much in the individual object itself (not to diminish in any way its importance, of course) but rather in the unfolding, slowly over time, of revelatory experience. But I'm wondering something more fundamental, given the scope of your enterprise: why painting? Doesn't the canvas itself, by its very artificiality, immediately call into question the seamless experience you are after? I have addressed the problem by evolving to the grid with its specific characteristics, and acknowledging the canvas's inherent object-ness, working within these strict parameters to discover increasingly subtle ways of encoding a great deal of information that will be intrinsically available, even when the artist is gone. (That's an insight into how challenging working solely within an exclusive format can be). Have you ever considered leaving the canvas in favor of site installations -- or? Robert Irwin, who began as a painter of extremely subtle perceptual experiences, did just that: closed down his studio & began working in a completely different & more philosophically coherent manner. As you have a taste for philosophical treatises, you might want to seek out his book 'Being And Circumstance: Notes Toward A Conditional Art' (1985).

Cynthia: Nine times out of ten, I'll bet you walk through that doorway rather than through the wall to get to the next room, despite our common understanding that All is in its deepest reality an undifferentiated, whirling array of dancing subatomic probabilities. Scale, or point of reference is key.

Dan: Geez, I'm up to 99 out of 100, if not 999 out of a thousand. I can't remember when I was last so unsober as to mistake an opening for a prescribed boundary. But this goes to discerning sensibilities, appropriateness -- yes, to scale and also to common sense, to the sense (mindfulness) that is common to all other senses. Even as I existentially know that my "Dan-ness" is a cultural construction, that I, as Dan, don't actually exist -- this fact doesn't impede me from cultivating a personality or learning to act appropriately in social situations. Yes, meaning is contextual, "knowing" is scale specific.

Cynthia: You make reference to a "progressive myth" which I didn't follow ("it appeared to me his [Ed Garman's] use of the transcendent was rooted in a progressive myth") -- could you explain?

Dan: There were several instances, I recall two ... First, Ed Garman referred to the conventional use of the mundane versus the sublime, that the mundane was to be transcended to reach the Sublime. A dichotomy that to my mind stays hopelessly trapped in dualism. Implied is the constant effort required to "rise above", "progress beyond" the ordinary. That which moves you beyond the ordinary is good, that which doesn't is not good. I don't find in this view the Eastern notion of: before enlightenment, a mountain is a mountain, a river is a river; and after enlightenment, a mountain is a mountain, a river is a river. That the sublime is here, part & parcel with the mundane.

The other reference came as Ed talked about reaching certain plateaus of excellence in his work, where piece after piece he'd consistently have to give himself A++ star, stars. For him, such states of excellence generated their own blandness which needed to be transcended. He had to punch thru to the next level. When I asked him if there was always another level, he said yes, there always is.

Cynthia: Even your statement "The sublime is within the mundane" is expressed in dualistic terms, despite pointing to an unbroken unity.

Dan: You only see "The sublime is within the mundane" as a dualistic expression because, by convention, you have polarized the significance of "sublime" & "mundane". It can also be seen as a

statement of identity, a quality of self within itself, just as "The earth is in the heavens" is, if we accept the perspective that the Earth is indeed part'n'parcel a bit of the heavens (hence Heaven itself).

Cynthia: ... longing for a Unified Theory of Everything? ...

Dan: I'm not looking for a Unified Theory (or theory at all for that matter). Direct experience, feeling the physical sensations arising in this very moment, itself is unity consciousness.

Cynthia: ... in our daily living we do appear to function most efficiently within the sphere of duality.

Dan: Is it necessarily so? Is it conditioning or constitutional? It may well be how we are organized. Social conventions are chief among the structures of my mind. Language is evidence of this. How can I consciously re-structure my language? Not alone. Language by it's inherent nature is a dynamism developed by collective usage. We can't think outside the box. We must jointly cultivate a new one, or re-construct the living one.

Gautama Buddha offered a model for Mind which I find instructive and a potential touchstone for re-languaging our collective minds and hence how we may function in our daily living. I call it the Four Quadrant Model of Mind. Clearly Gautama understood hundreds of distinct & subtle qualities of the Mind, but here for simplicity constructs just four categories.

The first quadrant is Awareness or the Mind itself. Awareness is the whole of the Mind, and here, the first quadrant. Awareness says: "There is something". The Second quadrant is perception. Perception identifies, says: "Ah, here it is!" The third is sensing, feeling, discernment. In the third quadrant we may also describe, describe both the thing being perceived and how we feel. In the third quadrant we feel & experience and can also describe: "It is black & white, fuzzy with a wet nose ..." Up to here we remain in Unity Consciousness.

The fourth quadrant is duality. It is the push/pull of polarities, good & evil, pain & pleasure, right & wrong. It is also other dissecting qualities of Mind like analysis, criticism, association, metaphor, judgement. Duality separates the perceiver from the perceived, the experiencer from the experience. In duality we form a bias, we seek pleasure, avoid pain, which leads to endless cycles of addiction and/or aversion.

I can't help but wonder if a small dedicated group cultivating the usage of the Four Quadrant Model could re-instruct the biases of their language & mind and function effectively in their daily lives.

Ed Garman: ... cultivating the usage of this model, I suggest the construction of a new model... AMEN. Happy thought. Can this be done? Work out the kinks. Find the language. What would be the terms of inter-personal agreement? How might they be defined? What could be used to find confirmation? Diversity does not necessarily mean disagreement. Verbal distinctions should be valued, since they stand for mental -- intellectual -- distinctions.

Dan: Yes, for understanding in a dialog, clearly, distinctly defining verbiage & concepts is paramount. It appears more useful, in terms of inter-personal agreement, if both parties are "coming from an I orientation"; that is, I feel ... I sense ... I see ... it is my experience ... describing clearly & simply just what "I" empirically perceive or experientially know. The magic of understanding another can only take place with deep listening and a willingness to see things from a wholly other vantage point. When we have

clear-cut, mutually understood and confirmed definitions and the benefit of the others' description of direct experience, then the hoped for agreement can be sought. Chief among these mutually understood distinctions, of course, would need to be our core, fundamental values. If this languaging is evidence of the structures of our minds, certainly we'd want to place our construction on a solid foundation.

What I call "appropriateness of scale" is important to me. As a simple construction of scale, we, as all human beings, have the eye of flesh, the eye of mind and the eye of contemplation. Each of these modes of knowing discloses its own corresponding dimension of being, and thus each is valid and important when addressing its own realm. They offer us a balance of empirical knowledge, rational knowledge and spiritual knowledge, but only when applied to their appropriate sphere.

Certainly of primary value for me is the understanding of feeling. Feelings in general can be distinctly noted by each of the 3 eyes of perception. The eye of flesh, with its 5 senses and their instrumental extensions, offers me subjective feelings of the physical world. This is the realm that most of empirical science investigates. The eye of mind, involved with interpretation, symbolic meaning and mutual understanding, offers the possibility to dialog with another. This input from another then provides an extended confirmation or deepened understanding of my subjective perceptions.

Emotional feelings seem to straddle both the realms of the flesh & mind. I can feel the physical sensations of an emotion in my body, as well as sense the reasons & causes and hence reshape this emotion with my mind, which allows for further discussion with you regarding the meaning of this emotion for me.

For me, the feeling of spirit is beyond the comprehension of mind. I can allude to it with metaphor, which of course moves me away from the direct experience itself. Spiritual feeling as seen by the eye of contemplation is an overwhelming bright clarity of wholeness which may have a dazzling array of physical & mental sensations and effects. How I can offer this feeling in dialog, beyond simply to point to it and ask you not to look at my pointing finger, is possibly beyond the scope of language, but we can seek ways to report our findings. Can't we?

Again, I find it imperative to assert the necessity of attending to the distinct clarity of "appropriateness of scale" when speaking of feeling, especially qualities of feeling. Certainly, so that I too can find the feeling you speak of, it would be useful to know by which eye you are seeing it, and then, any other more specific means of locating it.

Cynthia: Are you saying that unrealized thoughts, notions, ideas, fantasies, memories, dreams have a physical, tangible being?

Dan: Thoughts can languish as "forgotten" memories until those particle bits are recalled by the appropriate 'processing system' of consciousness. In us humans, the nervous system, brain, spinal cord, et al is our system of consciousness, with the brain apparently being the chief processor. Stored in memory, both within the body and externally, or flashing on the screen of current 'realization', either way, a thought is anchored in an ordered bit of matter and decoded at the appropriate scale.

Cynthia: I am intrigued by the phrase "spectrum understanding" and look forward to hearing more about it as the idea develops.

Dan: An "experiential spectral understanding", one that re-unites "this breathing body" with the seamless experiential web of life.

Donald Kuspit: The emergence of abstract art is supposedly the decisive, innovative event in 20th-century art. As many artists, critics and historians agree, the change from "confrontation with nature" to "abstract creation," demonstrating the artist's "individual attitude" as well as "visual acuity," to use the words of Olga Rozanova's 1911 statement -- one of the earliest advocating nonrepresentational art (it had great influence on Kasimir Malevich) -- inaugurated genuinely modern art. What has happened to abstract art since those revolutionary days? One can get some idea by comparing the gestural paintings of Jackson Pollock and Gerhard Richter, the geometrical paintings of Piet Mondrian and Agnes Martin, and the sculptural constructions of Naum Gabo and Richard Serra. In every case the movement from the earlier to the later artist involves diminution of complexity, standardization of means, loss of exaltation (Gabo's word) -- even a kind of expressive sterility or coldness -- and, perhaps most crucially, the replacement of spiritual suffering and aspiration by intellectualized boredom.

Dan: You can also witness boredom as a split produced by this overly --exercised intellect being detached from your senses. In this state, you are actually "beside yourself". When you fully occupy your senses, boredom is nowhere to be found. Come back to your senses, literally ... no, not literally, but actually ... actually come back to your senses: breathe, feel the coolness of the breath in your nostrils, feel all the sensations in your body. Feel the soles of your feet, taste the air, let your vision touch the textures before you, let the sounds of this moment waft thru your open presense ... fully feeling the physical sensations of life in this very moment is the antedote to boredom.

The very act of paying attention to your aliveness quickens the connection with your spirit, frees you from suffering. Integrating abstraction, pure idea, back into the thing itself, intersubjective art offers wholeness to mind and body. It is not a question of complexity or minimal means, tantalizing exaltation ... with even the most subtle of undistracted, engaged sensory delight, intersubjective art becomes an invitation to end boredom, end suffering ... to come to your home in the here & now, where you truly live.

Cynthia: Response to Donald Kuspit's commentary: the emergence of abstract art as the change from "confrontation with nature" to "abstract creation" --I'd say it's more precisely characterized by a change from the commonplace practice of "representing" to "presenting" -- i.e. conceiving the possibility of realizing a here-&-now, unmediated experience. Looking back at these early attempts from our current perspective where abstraction is ubiquitous, one may begin to appreciate how radical the idea was, at least in the West.

It's almost beyond belief, for example, that espousing the principles of abstraction was politically dangerous. Further: his indiscriminate lumping all forms of abstraction together fails to appreciate important distinctions: from Kandinsky, who may be said to have represented the "expressionist" wing of early abstraction, and Mondrian who championed the "essentialist" wing, there grew a significant divide: the former evolving into Abstract Expressionism which celebrated "individual attitude," personal idiosyncracies, chance, etc. while the latter became associated with the non-referential, embracing the

principles of exclusion, purification, claritas, oriented toward dematerialization, erasure of the artist-as-charismatic personality, and the desire to transcend superficialities of style & appearance. The purported "diminution of complexity" and "loss of exaltation" are interpretations I can't agree with -- these continue to flourish in the eye of the sensitive beholder.

Cynthia: The question is, do your paintings convince you?

Dan: Yes. And "Do the paintings convince me?" is one aspect, another is "What is the effect on others?" Ultimately art, for me, needs to be a dialog, an experimental conversation that can fluidly create & adjust to new input, or even, the lack of response. Thus far my work seems to clammer too loudly in its 'silent noise', calls for more distinct clarity, subtle nuance, sensitivity to the 'delicato'; too similar to conventional structures & formats to break most viewers from their unwitting visual habits. I feel the need to burst out of the Renaissance Window, shake my audience by their collective horn-rimmed glasses: "Wake-up, wake-up, come back to your senses, feel this, feel it as it is ... as it is ... " I am currently being drawn away from the Renaissance Window as a format for presentation. I'm in search of another means to support paint that won't transport the viewer to other worlds, but rather invite them to open to the pure experience of their senses. Any ideas on what such a format & support might be?

Cynthia: ... Grids and Painting...

Amy Goldin: It may seem excessively magical to claim that in choosing one type of organization or another the artist establishes fundamental relationship to the viewer that no later artistic decision can abrogate.

Dan: Maybe for some excessively magical, for me, quite evident. I just completed a piece constructed on a grid format of (12) 8"x12"x1.5" canvases joined in a reflective dynamic symmetry. Yes, Amy, it is all I love about a grid .. a sense of presence ... pervasive law ... majestic even . Still I'm not convinced that straight lines & right angles, even tho they are so easy & convenient to work with, speaks to 'the sense of the presence' I want to ultimately participate in. Yes, a grid can be imposed upon most anything. In that imposition, has my direct, personal dialog with the specific material, the thing I'm attending to, been differed? I use straight lines on the grid of my Plan to represent 1"x2" lumber which I'll create a demand for from the lumberyard, who will, in turn, make a demand of a lumbermill up north, who will hire a lumberjack to actually cut a young tree down, perhaps before its prime. Is this lumberjack's and my intention the same? If my ultimate aim is for my thoughts & actions to cause less harm, less suffering ... how do I reconcile displacing the conversation with the life of things I call for?

Ed: I'd like to say something about your point of view on "framing convention." There has been a lot of experiment on the shape (do I read you right) of the painter's format. It usually ends up more materialistic than the unpretentious rectangle. There is a thingyness about built shapes that don't express what I think you are capable of doing.

Dan: Bringing the viewer back to their senses, to the alive "thingyness" itself is exactly the invitation I am extending.

Diane: Embodying the "thingyness", isn't that what we are here for?

Dan: I'm looking to find "awareness of presence" by freeing paint from the service of forming structure, which is to be found in the physical thing itself. In a number of Ed Garman's paintings, I'm struck by how

the structural balance is achieved by a field wide reflective symmetry of form. Why is paint being forced into the service of the appearance of a structure to then be transcended? Why then support this paint by "the unassuming rectangle"? Is this making "invisible the visible" a required condition for the desired slight-of-eye perceptual effect of transcendence?

Ed: In the early days of our marriage Coreva and I spent a summer in Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West near Scottsdale, Arizona. He made a big issue about the nature of materials and the importance of an empathy toward it. But like most fine artists he sublimated them through the kind of structure he made from them. Amen.

David Abram: Genuine art, we might say, is simply human creation that does not stifle the nonhuman element but, rather, allows whatever is Other in the materials to continue to live and to breathe. Genuine artistry, in this sense does not impose a wholly external form upon some ostensibly "inert" matter, but rather allows the form to emerge from the participation and reciprocity between the artist and his materials, whether these materials be stones, or pigments, or spoken words. Thus understood, art is really a cooperative endeavor, a work of cocreation in which the dynamism and power of earth-born materials is honored and respected. In return for this respect these materials contribute their more-than-human resonances to human culture.

Doug Simay: Whether it is painting, sculpture, auto mechanics or biological mechanics, respect for all aspects of materials and techniques is paramount to successful interpretation and thus the "art" of performance. The opposite is obviously not art e.g. strip mining. The respect for all aspects of our material and spiritual world facilitates balance and all art students are taught the importance of balance in the final amalgamation of line, tone, color, shape, and texture.

Dan: Yes, there is artistry in performances of all kinds. Yes, balancing the formal elements within an individual thing, as well as, in the relations between things speaks clearly to its integrity, wholeness, wellness and aesthetics. But what am I asking my art, these materials, to serve? Yes, there is a primary distinction made in the intent of the skills applied to "clear cutting" rather than "select cutting" a forest. Even within the more artful endeavor of "select cutting", the orientation's criterion for choosing is essential. Is the choosing made primarily to serve the needs & efficiency of the saw mill and "thus to human use"? Then who speaks for the forest? Who gives voice in the dialog with regard to the sovereignty of each individual tree, the whole web of life nested in the forest? In light of this, somehow I remain embroiled in the question, I can't escape it: "What am I asking my art, these materials to serve?" "How can I speak more directly to, with and ultimately be the voice for these things' living"?

Rumi: The Soul is here for its own Joy.

Henepola Gunaratana: "Don't muddy the pure experience with concepts or pictures or discursive thinking."

Cynthia: What if a silent painting were to be approached in this manner....?

Dan: But, then, who would have painted this silent painting?

Cynthia: Who wants to know?

Dan: this breathing body!

David Abram: AS WE REACQUAINT OURSELVES WITH OUR BREATHING BODIES, then the perceived world itself begins to shift and transform. When we begin to consciously frequent the wordless dimension of our sensory participations, certain phenomena that have habitually commanded our focus begin to lose their distinctive fascination and to slip toward the background, while hitherto unnoticed or overlooked presences begin to stand forth from the periphery and to engage our awareness.

The countless human artifacts with which we are commonly involved—the asphalt roads, chain-link fences, telephone wires, buildings, lightbulbs, ballpoint pens, automobiles, street signs, plastic containers, newspapers, radios, television screens—all begin to exhibit a common style, and so to lose some of their distinctiveness; meanwhile, organic entities—crows, squirrels, the trees and wild weeds that surround our house, humming insects, streambeds, clouds and rainfalls—all these begin to display a new vitality, each coaxing the breathing body into a unique dance. Even boulders and rocks seem to speak their own uncanny languages of gesture and shadow, inviting the body and its bones into silent communication. In contact with the native forms of the earth, one's senses are slowly energized and awakened, combining and recombining in ever-shifting patterns.

For these other shapes and species have coevolved, like ourselves, with the rest of the shifting earth; their rhythms and forms are composed of layers upon layers of earlier rhythms, and in engaging them our senses are led into an inexhaustible depth that echoes that of our own flesh. The patterns on the stream's surface as it ripples over the rocks, or on the bark of an elm tree, or in a cluster of weeds, are all composed of repetitive figures that never exactly repeat themselves, of iterated shapes to which our senses may attune themselves even while the gradual drift and metamorphosis of those shapes draws our awareness in unexpected and unpredictable directions.

In contrast, the mass-produced artifacts of civilization, from milk cartons to washing machines to computers, draw our sense into a dance that endlessly reiterates itself without variation. To the sensing body these artifacts are, like all phenomena, animate and even alive, but their life is profoundly constrained by the specific "functions" for which they were built. Once our bodies master these functions, the machine-made objects commonly teach our senses nothing further; they are unable to surprise us, and so we must continually acquire new built objects, new technologies, the latest model of this or that if we wish to stimulate ourselves.

Of course, our human-made artifacts inevitably retain an element of more-than-human otherness. This unknowability, this otherness, resides most often in the materials from which the object is made. The tree trunk of the telephone pole, the clay of the bricks from which the building is fashioned, the smooth metal alloy of the car door we lean against—all these still carry, like our bodies, the textures and rhythms of a pattern that we ourselves did not devise, and their quiet dynamism responds directly to our senses. Too often, however, this dynamism is stifled within mass-produced structures closed off from the rest of the earth, imprisoned within technologies that plunder the living land. The superstraight lines and right angles of our office architecture, for instance, make our animal senses wither even as they support the abstract intellect

Dan: ala Modernism & Mondrian?

David Abram: The wild, earth-born nature of the materials—the woods, clays, metals, and stones that went into the building—are readily forgotten behind the abstract and calculable form. It is thus that so much of our built environment, and so many of the artifacts that populate it, seem sadly superfluous and dull when we identify with our bodies and taste the world with our animal senses. (Of course, this is not to say that these artifacts are innocuous: many of them are exceedingly loud, even blaring, for what they lack in variation and nuance they must make up in clamorous insistence, monopolizing the perceptual field).

Donald Kuspit: There is a difference between art that is a rebellion against and even destructive attack on the social contract -- which is what shock-schlock art at its most interesting seems to be -- and art that offers an experiential, qualitative alternative to it, in effect sidestepping it. When Christ said "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God what is God's," he was reminding us that there is another, more important and profounder world than the world of social power. So does pure art.

David Abram: Whenever we assume the position and poise of the human animal—Merleau-Ponty's body-subject—then the entire material world itself seems to come awake and to speak, yet organic, earth-born entities speak far more eloquently than the rest. Like suburbanites after a hurricane, we find ourselves alive in a living field of powers far more expressive and diverse than the strictly human sphere to which we are accustomed.

SO THE RECUPERATION OF THE INCARNATE, SENSORIAL DIMENSION of experience brings with it a recuperation of the living landscape in which we are corporeally embedded. As we return to our senses, we gradually discover our sensory perceptions to be simply our part of a vast, interpenetrating webwork of perceptions and sensations borne by countless other bodies—supported, that is, not just by ourselves, but by icy streams tumbling down granitic slopes, by owl wings and lichens, and by the unseen, imperturbable wind. This intertwined web of experience is, of course, the "life-world" to which Husserl alluded in his final writings, yet now the life-world has been disclosed as a profoundly carnal field, as this very dimension of smells and tastes and chirping rhythms warmed by the sun and shivering with seeds.

It is, indeed, nothing other than the biosphere—--the matrix of earthly life in which we ourselves are embedded. Yet this is not the biosphere as it is conceived by an abstract and objectifying science, not that complex assemblage of planetary mechanisms presumably being mapped and measured by our remote-sensing satellites; it is, rather, the biosphere as it is experienced and lived from within by the intelligent body—by the attentive human animal who is entirely a part of the world that he, or she, experiences.

Tomas Tranströmer: Tired of all who come with words, words but no language / I went to the snow-covered island. / The wild does not have words. / The unwritten pages spread themselves out in all directions! / I come across the marks of roe-deer's hooves in the snow. / Language, but no words.

Ed: The course I took has been the search for purity which is simply the removal of the things both visual and mental, or in purest terms unfunctional. First had to come the idealization then the struggle toward transcendency in every phase of creative hope.

Dan: Yes, I can see the usefulness of reduction for narrowing a focus, but I wouldn't mistake "selectivity" for "purity". Reductionism in philosophy, like extracts in biochemistry and abstracts in painting, seem to share a common homage to scientific positivism, which tends to place an object "out there", separate from me, the subject. This subject/object "magic" is built into the very structure of the grammar of our written language.

Positivism deals only with its own "spellbound facts" and refuses to address such questions as how "the materials of the universe reinvented themselves by alchemic relationships to become life". Experientially, reductionist positivism is a house of mirrors. Ed, are you familiar with the Phenomenology of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty & Heidegger? Their collective contribution toward understanding 'intersubjective' reality provide an antidote for this objectifying of experience.

David Abram: Intersubjectivity:

In the early stages of his project, Husserl spoke of the world of experience (the "phenomenal" world) as a thoroughly subjective realm. In order to explore this realm philosophically, he insisted that it be viewed as a wholly mental dimension, an immaterial field of appearances. That which experiences this dimension—the experiencing self, or subject—was similarly described by Husserl as a pure consciousness, a "transcendental" mind or ego.

Perhaps by designating subjective reality as a nonmaterial, transcendental realm, Husserl hoped to isolate this qualitative dimension from the apparently mechanical world of material "facts" that was then being constructed by the objective sciences (and thus to protect this realm from being colonized by those technological methods of inquiry). Yet his insistence upon the mental character of phenomenal reality led critics to attack Husserl's method as being inherently solipsistic—an approach that seals the philosopher inside his own solitary experience, rendering him ultimately unable to recognize anyone or anything outside of his own mind.

Husserl struggled long and hard to answer this important criticism. How does our subjective experience enable us to recognize the reality of other selves, other experiencing beings? The solution seemed to implicate the body—one's own as well as that of the other—as a singularly important structure within the phenomenal field. The body is that mysterious and multifaceted phenomenon that seems always to accompany one's awareness, and indeed to be the very location of one's awareness within the field of appearances. Yet the phenomenal field also contains many other bodies, other forms that move and gesture in a fashion similar to one's own. While one's own body is experienced, as it were, only from within, these other bodies are experienced from outside; one can vary one's distance from these bodies and can move around them, while this is impossible in relation to one's own body.

Despite this difference, Husserl discerned that there was an inescapable affinity, or affiliation, between these other bodies and one's own. The gestures and expressions of these other bodies, viewed from without, echo and resonate one's own bodily movements and gestures, experienced from within. By an associative "empathy", the embodied subject comes to recognize these other bodies as other centers of experience, other subjects.

In this manner, carefully describing the ways in which the subjective field of experience, mediated by the body, opens onto other subjectivities—other selves besides one's own self—Husserl sought to counter the charge of solipsism that had been directed against his phenomenology. The field of appearances, while still a thoroughly subjective realm, was now seen to be inhabited by multiple

subjectivities; the phenomenal field was no longer the isolate haunt of a solitary ego, but a collective landscape, constituted by other experiencing subjects as well as by oneself.

There remain, however, many phenomena in the experiential field that are not collective or commonly shared. When daydreaming, for example, my attention is carried by phenomena whose contours and movements I am able to alter at will, a whole phantasmagoria of images that nevertheless lack the solidity of bodies. Such forms offer very little resistance to my gaze. They are not, that is, held in place by gazes other than my own—these are entirely my images, my phantasies and fears, my dreamings.

And so I am brought, like Husserl, to recognize at least two regions of the experiential or phenomenal field: one of phenomena that unfold entirely for me— images that arise, as it were, on this side of my body—and another region of phenomena that are, evidently, responded to and experienced by other embodied subjects as well as by myself. These latter phenomena are still subjective—they appear to me within a field of experience colored by my mood and my current concerns—and yet I cannot alter or dissipate them at will, for they seem to be buttressed by many involvements besides my own. That tree bending in the wind, this cliff wall, the cloud drifting overhead: these are not merely subjective; they are intersubjective phenomena—phenomena experienced by a multiplicity of sensing subjects.

HUSSERL'S NOTION OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY SUGGESTED a remarkable new interpretation of the so-called "objective world." For the conventional contrast between "subjective" and "objective" realities could now be reframed as a contrast within the subjective field of experience itself—as the felt contrast between subjective and intersubjective phenomena.

The sciences are commonly thought to aim at clear knowledge of an objective world utterly independent of awareness or subjectivity. Considered experientially, however, the scientific method enables the achievement of greater intersubjectivity, greater knowledge of that which is or can be experienced by many different selves or subjects. The striving for objectivity is thus understood, phenomenologically, as a striving to achieve greater consensus, greater agreement or consonance among a plurality of subjects, rather than as an attempt to avoid subjectivity altogether. The pure "objective reality" commonly assumed by modern science, far from being the concrete basis underlying all experience, was, according to Husserl, a theoretical construction, an unwarranted idealization of intersubjective experience.

Cynthia: Oh no, simply watching water boil won't affect its temperature (although doing so may provide a lesson in the elastic nature of time...) but what if we think of the works of the imagination in much broader terms: for example, this brass teakettle, that jasmine-blossom tea, the books we read & music we listen to while relaxing in our favorite easychair, the vast networks of energy/water/communication systems which permit us to carry out the most basic of everyday activities, without giving them a second thought -- all these things that surround & support us, both simple objects & complex systems, visible and invisible, have come about through acts of imagination and are the tangible results of ideas & actions in concert with the laws of the real world.

David Abram: The "real world" in which we find ourselves, then—the very world our sciences strive to fathom—is not a sheer "object", not a fixed and finished "datum" from which all subjects and subjective qualities could be pared away, but is rather an intertwined matrix of sensations and perceptions, a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles. The mutual inscription of others in my experience, and (as I must assume) of myself in their experiences, effects the interweaving of our individual phenomenal fields into a single, ever-shifting fabric, a single phenomenal world or "reality."

And yet, as we know from our everyday experience, the phenomenal world is remarkably stable and solid; we are able to count on it in so many ways, and we take for granted much of its structure and character. This experienced solidity is precisely sustained by the continual encounter with others, with other embodied subjects, other centers of experience. The encounter with other perceivers continually assures me that there is more to any thing, or to the world, than I myself can perceive at any moment.

Besides that which I directly see of a particular oak tree or building, I know or intuit that there are also those facets of the oak or building that are visible to the other perceivers that I see. I sense that that tree is much more than what I directly see of it, since it is also what the others whom I see perceive of it; I sense that as a perceivable presence it already existed before I came to look at it, and indeed that it will not dissipate when I turn away from it, since it remains an experience for others—not just for other persons, but for other sentient organisms, for the birds that nest in its branches and for the insects that move along its bark, and even, finally, for the sensitive cells and tissues of the oak itself, quietly drinking sunlight through its leaves. It is this informing of my perceptions by the evident perceptions and sensations of other bodily entities that establishes, for me, the relative solidity and stability of the world.

Ed: I just checked my dictionary as to the proper use of alchemy used above. It says, "the process of transforming something common to something precious." Is there any thing more precious than the evocation of the organic human spirit?

Dan: Perhaps, from a more-than-human orientation, in a word: compassion.

Cynthia: I wonder how you have reacted, given time to mull, to my suggestion to the question you posed re: direction of your painting. Perhaps too radical a leap for now, but I wonder if that isn't the trajectory, given the seamlessness of experience you seek. I remember several years ago, seeing what I believe were the prototypes of your recent series of paintings @ Simayspace... gorgeous objects, beautifully executed, yet I wondered even then if they could carry the heavy weight of ideas & clearly present to the viewer their intention.

Dan: Yes, here is the nut of what I'm after in my work: allowing the material to speak for itself in its own language. I make an effort not to operate from a reactionary orientation, but rather from the orientation of the creative. The direction my painting is going is a co-creation with the material involved, a matter of choice.

Cynthia: Your current plan is indeed dynamic, but only on the most obvious level, for, unlike an uninflected square (or nearly-square as in Martin's later canvases) which is at least a cue to a non-conventional way of seeing, this is a decidedly sculptural format, which you may find leads you back into an unavoidably conventional reading of the object-as-object, and thus even further away from the desired realization of unmediated experience.

Dan: Rather than a subject viewing an object-as-object, my intent is to offer the opportunity for an intersubjective relationship. In the first four people to witness the prototype of "Speaking Water, Silent Structure" (working title), I did indeed sense a reciprocal intersubjective response. The "thing" was in the same space as the viewer; it spoke in a readily understood, yet here-to-fore unheard of manner. It

listened to plain English and replied in a way that the viewer felt heard. Each subject, the viewer & the thing, informed the intersubjective reality that they together created.

Cynthia: These newly-coined phrases such as co-creation, intersubjective etc hurt my ears something fierce-- they carry a bit too much NewAgey freight for my taste. Let me see if I understand them as you intend: "co-creation" = acknowledging a creative quality in the materials themselves? "co-joining" = joining? "intersubjective paintings" = is this akin to my sense of the painting that watches me as I watch it, and, by extension, act upon each other? When you say "Each subject, the viewer and the thing, informed the intersubjective reality that they together created" I wonder how this differs from the experience of aesthetic arrest which Joyce describes as "the enchantment of the heart" -- that timeless moment of fusion of lover & beloved, of transcendence when the doors of perception are opened?

Again, is paint-on-canvas the most convincing means for achieving such an ambitious idea? If not site installations, then perhaps computer-generated virtual sites? I sense that this will become a significant new art form that is now only in its infancy.

Dan: Yes, my intent could be inclusive of a lot of styles & media -- from Irwin-like atmospheric light works, to complete environments speaking a seamless experience, and yes, even applied to electronic fields a play in cyberspace. The particular style or media of expression is optional. The media is a personal predilection, style is merely the packaging. The content -- the goods, the substance in reality must speak for itself. Styles, like fashions, come and go, the wrapper changes, but the relations to the goods inside -- this connectedness must remain constant. Right now I choose acrylic paint on canvas. Another line may develop with a more organic support. Either way, I feel "paint on stuff" is fertile ground for what I'm after.

Cynthia: Paintings are solidly material, and fundamentally deal in unchanging, discrete units; the severe limits of their object-ness must be embraced before one can hope to achieve the paradoxical sensation of energy & dematerialization, which describes the condition of the transcendent painting as I use the term. Here, rather than being "snapped to the underlying grid" the bits appear to rise from the underlying structure, and hover above in a perceptually-shifting ambiguous space between surface & viewer, as the grid gives way to the dancing experience of energy.

Tenzin Gyatso, the XIV Dalai Lama: "But still, one must take into account that in our perception of reality there are various levels of discrepancy between the way in which we perceive things and the way in which things and events really unfold. This may have some relation to a statement made in a Buddhist philosophical tenet known as "Madhyamika Prasangika," which provisionally accepts the distinction between falsity and reality, illusion and reality, but ultimately does not accept such a distinction."

Dan: My effort is to converse with the material in an overt marriage of Purist Ideal domain with a direct, sensuous living experience. "The Pure Ideal" and "The Immediate Sensuous" are two distinct dials on the tuner of reality. The Purist Ideal dwells in the realm of the intellect only. The intellect deals with the exactitude of number & proportion, lives in calculable fodder, the elemental pieces of the shell of the nut. The burgeoning meaty nut itself is the product of the squishy, gooey, messy erotic sensuous that nurtures and painstakingly grows its vital, self-perpetuating living.

The Pure Idea provides structural function, can offer balance & equilibrium, support place, protect open space and suggest an infinite array of what could be. The reciprocal sensuous steadfastly feels,

experiences what is, when it is; it may note, describe particular sensations and never lose touch with the experiences' immediacy.

Regarding "the paradoxical sensation of energy & dematerialization", does this "eye twittering optical illusion" owe its vibrancy of hovering in unfounded space to being locked into a geometry, a uniform structure and/or from the radiance generated from the juxtaposition of varying frequency of light refracted thru specific material, pigments? Is the effect independently attributable to the properties of color and/or the proportions of color one to another? If so, does it then need to be fixed in an ideal geometry or would an organic, lyrical patterning of unique bits serve just as well?

Cynthia: I have noted some rather loaded language in such phrases as "paint being forced" and "locked into geometry" --but geometry breathes eloquence in the right hands, and colors come willingly to bend themselves to the desire of their lover.

Wassily Kandinsky: As far as drawing and painting are concerned, the turn away from the representational—and one of the first steps into the realm of the abstract—was the exclusion of the third dimension, i.e., the attempt to keep the "picture" as painting upon a flat surface. Modeling was abandoned. In this way, the real object was moved nearer to the abstract, a move that indicated a certain progress. As an immediate consequence, however, one's possibilities became pinned down to the real surface of the canvas, so that painting took on new, purely material overtones. This pinning down was at the same time a limitation of possibilities.

The attempt to free oneself from this material [element], from this limitation, combined with the effort toward the compositional, naturally necessitated the abandonment of any one picture plane. An attempt was made to constitute the picture upon an ideal plane, which thus had to be in front of the material surface of the canvas. In this way, composition with flat triangles became composition with triangles that had turned plastic, three-dimensional, i.e., pyramids (so-called "Cubism"). Here also, however, inertia very quickly set in. Attention was concentrated especially upon this one particular form, hence leading once again to an impoverishment of resources. This is the inevitable result of the external application of a principle arising from internal necessity.

Particularly in this case, which is of very great importance, one should not forget that there are other means of both retaining the material surface and constituting an ideal surface, not only of fixing the latter as a flat plane, but also of exploiting it as a three-dimensional space. The very thinness or thickness of a line, the positioning of the form upon the surface, and the superimposition of one form upon another provide sufficient examples of the linear extension of space. Similar possibilities are offered by the correct use of color, which can recede or advance, strive forward or backward, and turn the picture into a being hovering in mid-air, which signifies the same as the pictorial extension of space.

The unification of these two kinds of extension in harmonious or disharmonious combinations is one of the richest and most powerful elements of linear-pictorial composition.

Cynthia: However, for the kind of kinetic experience you describe, perhaps you need a literally moving picture.

Dan: Unlike "the moving arts" (cinema, music, poetry), two dimensional painting doesn't force the shape of the experience with a linear, temporal "plot-line" onto the experiencer. My intersubjective "Speaking Water" paintings don't even try to suggest a particular sequence of exploration by "drawing the eye"

from here to there, but rather opens themselves more fully by simply "being with the felt space", and accumulatively with exposure in various conditions and states of mind. Further, extending the pictorial felt-space with topographical structuring offers an exploration "in the round" which mitigates the need for the "privileged vantage point (front & center)" that two-dimensional pictures so often require. When the composition is held in the round of the "Silent Structure" itself, then a glimpse from any angle or vantage point allows for contact and entrance into its space-time presence.

From a phenomenological point of view, space-time exists as a unitary continuum, especially for the way phenomena present themselves in our immediate, living experience. Our implicit, preconceptual sense of time could not be held apart from our preconceptual experience of space. To paraphrase Merleau-Ponty: "This very time that is space, this very space that is time, which we may possibly rediscover by re-engaging with, dis-objectifying the visible and this flesh...."

David Abram: In 1905, Albert Einstein challenged the Newtonian view of absolute time and absolute space with his "special theory of relativity". Einstein's equations in this, and later in the "general theory of relativity" did not treat of time and space; they assumed, instead, the existence of a unitary continuum that Einstein termed "space-time". Space-time, however, was a highly abstract concept unthinkable apart from the complex mathematics of relativity theory. Einstein's mathematical revelations, in other words, did little to challenge the Kantian assumption that separable space and time were necessary and unavoidable forms in all ordinary perception. While space-time held sway within the conceptual order of relativity physics, our direct, perceptual experience was still assumed to be structured according to the separable dimensions of time and space.

It thus fell to the tradition of phenomenology to call into question the distinction between space and time at the level of our direct, preconceptual experience. Of course, phenomenology did not set out to undermine this distinction—only to attend, as closely as possible, to the way phenomena present themselves in our immediate, lived experience. Indeed, phenomenologists tended to assume, at the outset, a clear distinction between space and time. It was only toward the end of his investigations regarding the phenomenology of "time consciousness" that Edmund Husserl was led to suggest that the experience of time is rooted in a deeper dimension of experience that is not, in itself, strictly temporal.

Husserl's assistant, the German phenomenologist Martin Heidegger, returned again and again to the analysis of temporal experience. In his massive and influential work 'Being and Time', Heidegger disclosed, underneath the commonplace Aristotelian idea of time as an infinite sequence of "now points", a forgotten sense of time as the very mystery of Being, as that strange power—essentially resistant to all objectification or representation—that nevertheless structures and makes possible all our relations to each other and to the world. This mystery cannot be represented, precisely because it is never identical to itself; primordial time, for Heidegger, is from the first outside-of-itself, or "ecstatic." Indeed, the past, the present, and the future are here described by Heidegger as the three "ecstasies" of time, the three ways in which the irreducible dynamism of existence opens us to what is outside ourselves, to that which is other.

Yet Heidegger gradually came to suspect that this implicit, preconceptual sense of time could not be held apart from our preconceptual experience of space. Hence, in an important essay written late in his career, Heidegger alludes to a still more primordial dimension, which he calls "time-space"—a realm neither wholly temporal nor wholly spatial, from whence "time" and "space" have been artificially derived by a process of abstraction.

Meanwhile, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, continually deepening his own investigations of perceptual experience, also came, in his final work, to assert an experiential realm more originary than space and time, from which these two dimensions have been derived. In the working notes to *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty writes of "this very time that is space, this very space that is time, which I will have rediscovered by my analysis of the visible and the flesh." Yet this analysis was cut short by his sudden death in 1961.

So all three phenomenologists—Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty—came independently, in the course of their separate investigations, to suspect that the conventional distinction between space and time was untenable from the standpoint of direct, preconceptual experience. Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty were both striving, toward the end of their lives, to articulate a more immediate modality of awareness, a more primordial dimension whose characteristics are neither strictly spatial nor strictly temporal, but are rather—somehow—both at once.

We have seen that such a mode of experience is commonplace for indigenous, oral peoples, for whom time and space have never been sundered. The tradition of phenomenology, it would seem, has been striving to recover such an experience from within literate awareness itself—straining to remember, in the very depths of reflective thought, the silent reciprocity wherein such reflection is born. No single one of these thinkers was entirely successful in reconciling time and space. Yet their later writings provide tantalizing clues, talismans for those who are struggling today to bring their minds and their bodies back together, and so to regain a full-blooded awareness of the present.

Doug Simay: I found your painting to be very different than what we showed. It seemed to be a layered painting with one plane floating on another. My knee-jerk, realist, literal view played a pond with koi underneath the surface but with their golden reflection/refraction coming off the water surface. It is that animated quality of light that comes from a spirit/body.

Dan: This response makes perfect sense to me, that it generated the feeling of "speaking water". My effort here is to quiet my interjections and allow the materials of the medium to speak for themselves, in their own language, as it were. That these pigment "tracks" left from water-borne media speak of swishy animated spirit/bodies emerged in wet places bodes well that the dialog is focused in "the tongue of the watercourse way".

Doug: Anyway, I experienced differently from our show. No quality judgment is implicit with that. I like different. I like growth and evolution.

Dan: Oh good, because my work has just taken another major turn. In busting out of the "Renaissance Window", I'm exploring new formats and ways to support the paint. In so doing, I realized I can relieve the paint of the service of having to create structure (and hence, composition) by having the physical support itself provide a sense of presence, domain ... a pervasive law. My first prototype elicits a completely different look and feel. There are (12) 8"x12"x1.5" rectangles assembled in a dynamic, balanced asymmetry. Tho the surface of each rectangle is a "skin" from "Speaking Waters" pieces, the combined effect is really something quite different. The "Silent Structure" adds a whole new realm.

On the skins of stretched canvas I am learning the language of water; and in as much as possible, how this language is received by woven cotton when humans are not around. Sometimes we humans get

glimpses in "spills" and "accidents" as water speaks naturally to whatever is receiving it. I'm trying to encourage that conversation and keep track of it with mineral pigments encased in clear plastic. Of course, each mineral pigment adds its own vibration/frequency/wavelength, as well as particular physical properties, to the conversation ... so, it is a complex dialog, several voices speaking at once. The viewer must choose which to tune into.

I am not trying to structure the conversation, as it is, on the skin itself, but rather allow the silent inclusive presence/place/domain be shaped by the actual physicality of the matter itself. It has its own weight, volume, mass and place. My "Silent Structures" begin as right-angled boxes locked into a geometry of numbered order, a purist ideal. Over these are stretched the "skins" which bare the marks of "Speaking Water". Together they form the multiple soundings of events occurring in a single place: "Speaking Water / Silent Structure". Co-joining sensuous, sentient matter respectfully within pure ideal felt-space ... a marriage of possibilities with what actually is conveyed in its own natural tongue.

Cynthia: I like your richly evocative description of the joining of the Ideal and the Sensual --yet, every serious painting participates in this Marriage Feast, does it not? : the fusion of form & feeling, sense & sensibility?

Dan: Yes, but look closely here: form & function, structure & domain, the whole notion of being composed is the banquet table (made of things that enjoy such duty), the feast is presented on. The sumptuous smells, delicate tastes, the chewy wet morsels of the feast itself are freed to exhibit their own natural qualities. The paint is not pressed into the service of composing the scaffolding for feeling to hang from, the composition ... the structure creates its own domain, its own presence. It's not illusionary, it's substantial. The substance acts as substance, the surface content is "here for its own joy".

Cynthia: I thought of you when looking at a recent article in Art in America on Cornelia Parker: how she has suspended her various objects in space with thin wires -- & imagined an exhibition of your current project-in-the-works with even less dependence on the traditional supports: say, paintings mounted on flexible hardware cloth cut slightly smaller than the canvases so it remains invisible, and these wafer-thin images suspended by equally invisible wires float before the eyes. Waterworld...

Cynthia: I have noted some rather loaded language in such phrases as "paint being forced" and "locked into geometry" -- but geometry breathes eloquence in the right hands, and colors come willingly to bend themselves to the desire of their lover.

Dan: Yes, of course, if the materials come willingly, but they too have their own desires. To be privy to the fullness of "the spirit within the thing" requires a mutual, reciprocal respect, where agendas are set aside and pre-formed notions are unlocked. Colors come part'n parcel with particles and geometries are but one way to find our way. I can look on the grid map for Main Street and First Avenue or I can follow the landmarks of the Palm trees, jagged rocks and the corner Starbucks. I'm suggesting that the eloquence and beauty we seek to illicit be formed from a true consensus with all sentient beings involved, so that all beings may be happy.

Jean-François Lyotard's 'Sam Francis: Lesson of Darkness' (1993): Tautology and contradiction are, in the domain of logic, like white and black in that of colours. The latter mark the limits of the visible although they seem to be visible, and the former the limits of what makes sense, however comprehensible they appear. One step over the threshold, looking through, one can no longer say or see what there is. Local colours and distinct meanings are abolished in the white repetition of the same or in dark inconsistency.

Cynthia: "Making invisible the visible"? No, I think the visible may only be quieted (or indeed celebrated if that is what is called for) but never rendered truly invisible. Yet it can be imagined, one of those tantalizing paradoxes that invites the next step along the path. (What is the corresponding trajectory of the development of micro/nanotechnologies but increasing, and increasingly astonishing, miniaturization, toward virtual dematerialization) "Open Your Eyes And You Can Fly!"

Dan: Once again, risking the white noise of tautology, I must site the primacy of appropriate scale in perception. I "open" a television and I can "see" the world. The television has magnified my sight, my hearing, my mind. The wavelength of energy that these television signals ride in/on are invisible to my naked eye. Far from moving toward de-materialization, my awareness has been re-materialized in all its 1300 channel glory thru this always-been-there-newly-discovered media. Things electronic, tho they boggle our noodles, are appropriate within their own scale. Tho beyond the edge of my unmagnified, direct experience they are decidedly material. So too, stretched cotton canvas is decidedly material, material in a scale appropriate for this my naked sighted world.

Isn't it appropriate that I address it as such, as present? When I "open my eyes" shouldn't I see this thing and be grounded in a common reality? What would be the purpose of not seeing it and being transported on a flight of fantasy?

There is the notion that some things are present by their absence, like the past & future, or the backside of a three-dimensional object. The past can be found in this world in the descent into, or sprouting up from "under-the-ground"; the future as a passage out toward, or coming to us inward from a vast openness just "beyond-the-horizon". In a conventional, framed two-dimensional painting everything is presented at once, nothing is hidden or held back from view. Yes, a past can be inferred from "under-the-ground" of the canvas itself. A future is implied if the canvas is not framed and provides an edge beyond view, or an illusion of a future is provided with a horizon line for your eye to go beyond, or plastic things to move around in your imagination.

If we make believe that the canvas is not there, the image of an abstract painting separates itself from space, it separates itself from time. If the painting provides an "aerial view" with no horizon line and the picture is not grounded-in but hovering in front of the canvas, it effects a quality of timelessness because it has projected itself into an imaginary space. It's part optics and part make-believe. It's only by the ignoring, suspending belief that we affect the magic of making this something absent that is present.

Cynthia: As for myself, perhaps it's because my ancestry is as much (if not more) anchored in Islamic geometries as in European aesthetics/metaphysics that I'm quite at home with the square format (chosen? no, it's really a question of its rightness); the earlier geometries have evolved into grids, as far as the major paintings post-1999 are concerned; this has come about slowly, organically if you will. For me, the intuitively-unfolding experience continues to be: the more things stay the same, the more they change.

A. Coomaraswamy: 'Transformation of Nature In Art': Islamic art, which in so many ways links East with West, and yet by its aniconic character seems to stand in opposition to both, really diverges not so much in fundamental principles as in literal interpretation. For naturalism is antipathetic to religious art of all kinds, to art of any kind....

Asiatic art is ideal in the mathematical sense: like Nature, not in appearance, but in operation....What representation imitates is the idea of the species of the thing, by which is known intellectually, rather than the substance of the thing as it is perceived by the senses.

Dan: Oh my, I can't imagine a naturalism that could have a natural aversion to art or religion. In fact, for me, what art, religion and science, for that matter, seek is nature. Religion concerns itself with the cause, nature and purpose of the universe. Art is mired in self-deception if it thinks it can distinguish itself from nature. The best and the worst of art, the worst of human atrocity still subsists within the realm of nature.

Yes, a golden means of ratio & proportion are rife in nature, but nature is not a number or fixedly mathematical operation. It remains a mystery. If here a "mathematical sense" refers to the ordering of things by regular measures, then yes, I too have the gene for that sense. However, I feel Asiatic art, like European, draws away from and unfortunately implies a domination over, this natural world where I live when it ignores the "substance of the thing as it is perceived by the senses".

Okay, I understand what Coomaraswamy intends. I, too, employ the rhythms of ratio, proportions and repetition in my "silent structure". That art inherently seeks to progress beyond, to transform into something other than can be found in nature ... this is only natural as well. All organisms have built-in, hard-wired, if you will, the tendency to mutate & adapt differently, whether it's the intricate patterning of ice crystals or the architectural wonders of spider webs. Humans aren't special this way, and not special that some of these adaptations progress in eloquent beauty, while others generate monsters.

Cynthia: One possible definition of transcendent: art addressed not to the senses but to the mind that opens the senses. When you describe your painting as "more than the sum of its parts" is this not a recognition of a quality of transcendence, a numinous "something-more" that sets it apart from similarly-conceived & executed paintings?

Dan: Yes, the mind itself is a sense. It is all the senses synaesthetically and itself pure awareness. "Synergistic gestalt", as I call it, that mind boggling delight of "all-of-it-at-once" is not something beyond, rather an awareness of all of it being simultaneously, totally present ... a mini-satori of instant recognition, if you will. Synergistic gestalt is perhaps akin to the culmination of a long, arduous trek up a steep mountainside bearing a heavy load, when you reach the peak and can put your load down and take in the whole expansive vista. No, not something set apart, rather something fully absorbed within ... a dewdrop absorbing an ocean.

Ed: In looking at the many modes of the intellectual, psychological, plus the experience of feeling, I have come down on the side of feeling. By this I mean that a media and the means is not the significant thing, it is the quality of feeling that is the most constructive thing. When water flashes into steam that is a qualitative thing. When a flat painted blue becomes luminescent because of its relationship with its environment that is a qualitative step. In my view its the one that counts.

When the materials of the universe reinvented themselves by alchemic relationships to become life that was a qualitative transcendent event. One of the most vital happenings as far as we are concerned in the history of the universe. I stress the transcendent as the product of relationships that produces a quality of feeling rather than a thing that by predestination can be made. Lucky for us when it happens. Each morning I arise with the determination to transcend the day with all its mundane requirements and against the pain of mortal and physical conditions. I'm not trying to live in a metaphysical world but to live to the best that I can be and do the best that I can do.

Dan: Ah yes, attending to the bitter-sweet & numerous needs of our best friend, this animal-body ... meeting "its requirements in light of the pain (hopefully, not suffering) of its mortal and physical conditions". The physical needs we can address one by one. There's a saying: "There are two ways to do the dishes. One way, to do the dishes to have clean dishes; the other, to do the dishes to do the dishes ... for it's own joy". As for our mortality, it will address us all-at-once. You and I will both die and our world with us, but the world will continue on. Apparently, you are closer to that edge than I (but who knows...), ready & willing to be re-absorbed "back-into-this-place".

Doug says "there are no good deaths, only having lived a good life". You have created the good fortune to leave such a legacy, not because you transcended your best friend, but rather because you attended to it faithfully and it served you well. You created the great fortune of having passionately lived a purposeful, useful life in offering comfort, while in defense of your country, to the most awful wounds that man inflicts upon himself, in husbanding your beloved, in fathering intelligent, healthy children, in developing & holding noble space for your culture's art, filled with sparkles of delight & joy ...

For all your friend's requirements look at the wonders it has produced. Luckily, the animal-body gets weary and is all too happy to be absorbed back-into-this-place. There is an end. And luckier still, for those of us who have cared, we can point to the goodness this creature gave us as solace for the loss of your living presence.

Ed: I've waited fifty years for talents worth encouraging to appear in this area. Now that you and Haney are here my hopes for spiritual continuity in this work may finally be realized.

Dan: Bless you! Hold that thought.

Cynthia: Re: "Speaking Water/Silent Structures" -- have you then decided to return to your former custom of titling? Personally, I like them, though do appreciate the excellent reasons for referring to paintings only by catalogue numbers or other equally neutral means. (Martin's eloquently silent canvases are shamelessly titled....). Perhaps it's because the number's neutrality doesn't really fool anyone: the viewer sees what he sees either way.... and maybe your title in this case will offer an additional cue?

Ed: Your number "AC0007D" is as ambiguous as were the titles previously. Why not try, "Dan, 8/26/2000". It tells who did it and a specific time context. Informing and sufficient.

Dan: Yes, I can already see you are right about the codified titling of "AC0007D". I'm not sure that giving the piece it's birthdate & "name of the father" as title would be quite to the point either. Perhaps something like "As It Is #101" or "The Thing Itself # 55" would be more of what I'm trying to point to. "Speaking Water/Silent Structure" is just a working title. The jury's still out on what titles will hang with the completed paintings.

Cynthia: More thoughts on language: As I believe I indicated, I did understand what the phrase "divine within the mundane" was intended to convey: what I'd hoped to show was the fundamental nature of the slippery silverfish of language itself. The word issuing from the mouth irrevocably rends the unity of silence.

Aw sure, it's all we've got, but it helps to remember that it inevitably trails dichotomies & dualisms in its wake.

These newly-coined phrases such as co-creation, intersubjective etc hurt my ears something fierce-- they carry a bit too much NewAgey freight for my taste. Let me see if I understand them as you intend: "co-creation" = acknowledging a creative quality in the materials themselves? "co-joining" = joining? "intersubjective paintings" = is this akin to my sense of the painting that watches me as I watch it, and, by extension, act upon each other? When you say "Each subject, the viewer and the thing, informed the intersubjective reality that they together created" I wonder how this differs from the experience of aesthetic arrest which Joyce describes as "the enchantment of the heart" -- that timeless moment of fusion of lover & beloved, of transcendence when the doors of perception are opened?

Dan: Perhaps from another view, the word issuing from the mouth remains nestled in and shaped by the unity of silence. Maybe silence is most poignantly felt "between-the-gaps" of words, but it's really the perception of depth of field, a choice as to where we want to put our focus.

Even more powerfully than the word issued from the mouth is this synaesthetic magic by which the marks of words before your eyes become heard by you as "this voice" in your head. And who's voice is it? Is it a male or female voice? Are you talking to yourself? The strongest evidence suggests it is the voice of our "literate psyche", currently the predominant psyche in our culture (so strong, in fact, that we commonly mistake "literate" for "actual" ... we say, "this or that is literally true", when we mean it is actually so).

In most all aboriginal "oral tradition" cultures, the prevailing psyche was that of "the ghost-of-the-breath that makes this lifeless corpse to dance". It was the advent of the phonetic written language of the Greeks (and more concretely, in the Middle Ages, with the spacing of sentences so that people no longer needed to read aloud, but could read "silently" to themselves) that the modern literal psyche was developed. It's common to mistake our literal psyche for "who I AM".

Our literal psyche exists in the field of silent awareness. Awareness, the silence, is not inert void, but pregnant knowing. Awareness knows absolutely. The silence is always here, it can not be shattered. Words are ripples on the pond of silence ... ripples, but still pond. In meditation, on a couple of occasions, words have completely quieted, the urge to generate sounds surrendered. I simply, silently witnessed the wholeness that is awareness. That's how I know.

Apparently the New Age is kinda slow in arriving ... Husserl coined the phrase "intersubjective" nearly a hundred years ago, approximately the same time Einstein was formulating his special theories of relativity and Kandinsky was under the Theosophically induced spell foreboding a "Second Coming". As for "co-joining", yes it is certainly an animist orientation that recognizes that all things are alive, sentient in their own special way, speaking from and listening within their own particular preceived dimension ... and worthy of an abiding respect. Perhaps these myriad of ways to preceive all contribute a uniqueness of sensing for The Mind.

Most often when speaking of my mind, it's not really my mind at all. It's my society's, my culture's mind, except to the extent that I have consciously chosen to change my mind. Learning to understand across dimension and converse in non-human languages requires a willingness to set aside my culture's bias of dominion over all other things. My agenda, if I have an agenda, is most usefully served with a "beginner's mind", a willingness to see things anew, fresh and as co-equal, with respect for their own sovereignty. To find what use we can be for each other (without simply exploiting to serve some ulterior motive, like paying the rent), I must learn how to most skillfully attune my orientation with its.

As I paint in water-borne media, I see this fish swimming in the ocean is mostly water, too. What's not water in me are the salts & minerals of the earth. I am the earth too. And I am the dancing sun. I am these things, they are not other. When listening to them, I am listening to myself. I am learning to speak with an intelligence other than the one formed by the literal "human-only" psyche, which sets itself apart in a senseless space.

It's not merely being aware of being watched as I watch it, it is an active dialog . Yes, I am actually speaking English to water, rocks, trees, blood cells amid air molecules, but more & more I am feeling them in reciprocal response.

Coming back from her Interactive Guided Imagery preceptorship, Carol offered a clear illustration of the distinctions between "subjective" and "intersubjective" experience. In an exercise designed to get a message from a stock item, one person chose a tree, another a rock.

The person imaging the tree saw a Eucalyptus tree that lives near her office. She talked to it. It said it had shallow roots, but that didn't matter, it was still deeply connected to the earth. The imager continued to "see" the tree outside herself, give it qualities she knew about and interpret those qualities by her own subjective criteria. She had a subjective experience of talking to a tree.

The person imaging rock became rock, embodied rockness. The density, gravity of rockness caused her to have to slip out of the chair into a solid, stable compressed lump on the floor. Time slowed immeasurably; the imager had to take a moment to re-orient herself in this more-than-human sensory dimension. Breathing was difficult in the transition until she learned the breathlessness of rock. She was now fixedly in an intersubjective "rockness" reality.

In this expanded awareness, she didn't lose her sense of self, her ability to listen to the voice of her guide, or to choose her focus -- whether to go deeper into rockness or come out to her usual human-only experiencing. She was both herself and rockness. This is an intersubjective experience, the expanded awareness, multi-tasking if you will, of allowing into your sense of self the perceptions of others' dimensionally distinct experiencing.

Cynthia: Notes from 'The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting' by Mark Cheetham (Cambridge, 1991).

Re: Kandinsky & pictorial composition -- Color and form are the main components of this language, but even though he devotes a great deal of energy to their technical investigation in this and other contexts, he is quick to establish that these grammatical components are nothing but means to a higher end. He is more concerned with the "What" of art than the "How", as he puts it several times. Both form and color are subordinated to the exigencies of inner necessity.

Re: the metaphor of crystallization: Critics see the "urge to abstraction" at work in the life-denying, inorganic, in the crystalline, or in general terms, in all abstract law and necessity..... (But for Klee and Kandinsky) "to crystallize is to capture purely an essence, to arrest and manifest it historically and materially -- this is exactly what abstraction claims to accomplish in art. Crystallization and abstraction are techniques -- not goals or objects -- within an eidetic alchemy; they distill essence...."

Schopenhauer: The ice on the window-pane is formed into crystals according to the laws of crystallization, which reveal the essence of the natural force here appearing, which in turn exhibit the Idea.

Dan: Yes, and no two ice crystals are exactly alike -- this is the sense of natural pattern & order that I am after.

Cynthia: Notes from 'The Rhetoric of Purity':

Re: Kandinsky's epiphany on accidentally seeing his painting afresh: Kandinsky takes two main lessons from this happy experience, first, that objects harmed my pictures, and second, that there is a certain sort of absorptive reverie, a special species of inner vision, that allowed him to see objects anew. This new vision...requires that the artist indeed forget his external, conventional self, lose his encumbering individuality, or as Schopenhauer would have it, his will, and recall a more essential, pure stratum of existence that is found in the soul.... Absorption, then, like crystallization, is both a metaphor and a method for the process of gaining access to the absolute and making it manifest in all its purity.

Schopenhauer's description of contemplation....likewise focuses on the connection between absorption and the unification of subject and object in direct perception: We lose ourselves entirely in this object....we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist as pure subject.... We are no longer able to separate the perceiver from the perception, but the two have become one, since the entire consciousness is filled and occupied by a single image of perception.

Dan: I find Kandinsky's use of "inner necessity" and "soul" too subjectively based, too inherently solipsistic to wrap my tongue around. "The absolute" and "purity" are also conundrums that stand outside my comprehension. Perhaps you'd like to speak more to the notion of "purity". For me, even as I turn on my tap, the salts encrusting the fixtures belie a sense that the water I mix my paints with is anything but pure. As I open new jars of naphthol red, phthalo blue or azo yellow paint the pigments that give the appearance of these colors are as distilled as I'm going to get. As they mix, their appearance is less purely a primary color moving towards a secondary color, but so what, the suspended pigments soon to bound by the drying plastic at their elemental scale are unaltered. It seems that purity is

contextual and must be held within a particular frame of reference, for as soon as it is engaged relationally it begins to mix, even as it retains its singular identity.

Regarding Schopenhauer's description of contemplation ... Yes, as in Gautama Buddha's quadrant model of mind, perception is embedded in unitary consciousness.

Mohammed Dib: 'Omneros': One step into the design and all space is surpassed, there is no more space there is only the path you engrave in this paraphrase of calligraphy. You must go search the writing that searches and writes you.

Naum Gabo: 'The Constructive Idea in Art' (1937): Access to the realm of Art is open to every man. He judges about Art with the unconstrained ease of an employer and owner. He does not meditate about these processes which brought the artist or the group of artists to make one special kind of art and not another, or if occasionally he does he never relinquishes his right to judge and decide, to accept or reject; in a word, he takes up an attitude which he would never allow himself to take with science. He is convinced that on his judgments depend the value and the existence of the work of art. He does not suspect that through the mere fact of its existence a work of art has already performed the function for which it has been made and has affected his concept of the world regardless of whether he wants it to or not. The creative processes in the domain of Art are as sovereign as the creative processes in Science. Even for many theorists of Art the fact remains unperceived that the same spiritual state propels artistic and scientific activity at the same time and in the same direction.

...it is sufficient when Art prepares a state of mind which will be able only to construct, co-ordinate, and perfect instead of to destroy, disintegrate, and deteriorate. Material values will be the inevitable result of such a state. For the same reason the Constructive idea does not expect from Art the performance of critical functions even when they are directed against the negative sides of life. What is the use of showing us what is bad without showing us what is good? The Constructive idea prefers that Art perform positive works which will lead us toward the best.

Dan: Cynthia dear, perhaps you'd be right to talk me out of being a painter. In words alone it may make perfect sense. It's quite possible that my words don't yet match my deeds. You know I write & paint for their own sake. They are actually two distinctly different dimensions. That one is the content for the other is only incidental, not causal. I'm still becoming, I haven't arrived. Still somehow, one informs the other and I am motivated to keep on, in pursuit of both.

Perhaps painting isn't the optimal way to say what I'm trying to say. In one way, both the completed painting & the process is a mnemonic devise reminding me: "Come back, come back here and feel this "

Entering the second year with the painting now hanging above the kitchen table, I still find myself gently surprised as it draws me deeper into a discovery of fresh awareness. It's spoken to me a thousand times, never once repeating itself ... though most often my only refrain is: "Ah, thank you!"
