TECHNOLOGY AND THE SPIRIT: A CELESTIAL ENDEAVOR

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Our nation’s competitive prowess was ignited when we learned that the Russians had quietly ventured into space before us. At that time our country’s leader, nurtured on “competition”, called upon his nation to meet the challenge. The space program was quickly organized and implemented.

Within the space program, over the span of roughly fifty years, there have been many capable individuals who have been chosen to physically venture into the unknown. Yes, history records our past and scientists have researched the validity of scientific data regarding the reality of space, however astronomers and geologists quickly remind us of their search for new information, not vicariously but with on-the-site investigation.

As the space flights occurred, some of the astronauts had noted a powerful emotional experience while traveling in their new environment—space.

In contrast, some astronauts were completely focused on their task of completing the mission and chose not to include any deviation in their schedule for “distractions”.

The intention of this paper is to record “spirituality” which, for some of the astronauts was an extension of “earth-bound spirituality”, and an unexpected “spiritual revelation” for others. A subliminal appreciation of “silence”(quiet) seems to be a consistent undercurrent.

MOON “FLY AROUND”

Apollo 8: Commander: Frank Borman Jim Lovell* Anders
Command Module: Jim Lovell* Lunar Module:
*Second flt. Into space

After circling the moon with its colorless, gray powdered surface, pocked with crater after crater, they were disappointed and disinterested in the reality of the planet. For better sighting, the commander repositioned the spacecraft only to be startled by an “earthrise” slowly emerging from the horizon with its striking blue and white colors against the black sky. The miniature earth was startlingly beautiful in contrast to the barren moon. Later in an interview from space Jim Lovell called his home world “a grand oasis in space.” Seeing the beautiful, seemingly fragile earthrise on Christmas Eve reminded Anders appropriately of a Christmas ornament. Anders began to realize: “We came all this way to explore the moon, and the most important thing is that we discovered the earth. There was only quiet on the spacecraft.

Before the flight, Borman had barely thought about the spiritual impact of going to the moon. But now that he was here, he couldn’t deny it. What moved him most was his own planet; the only color in the universe. To see the earth rising beyond the moon on Christmas Eve was all the confirmation of a Creator that Borman needed. Now he was here, he was glad to have the TV camera; he wanted to share his new perspective with humanity. Each man would say what
impressed him most; then, just before Apollo 8 flew into darkness, they would give a joint reading of the message from Genesis I, I . . . In the beginning . . .

Apollo 11: Moonwalkers: Neil Armstrong -Commander and Buzz Aldrin
Command Module: Charlie Brown Lunar Module: Snoopy
Moon Orbiter: Mike Collins

In the weeks before launch, Buzz Aldrin had searched for some gesture that would be worthy of the moment on the moon, and he decided to celebrate Holy Communion. Deke Slayton had warned him against broadcasting any religious observance over the air; NASA was still coping with a controversy stirred by the Genesis reading on Apollo 8. Now that it was clear that he and Armstrong were on the moon to stay for a while, Aldrin took advantage of a quiet moment. He opened the stowage pouch that contained his personal momentos and removed a plastic bag containing a small flask of wine, a chalice and some wafers. He keyed his mike. “This is the LM pilot speaking. I'd like to take this opportunity to ask every person to give thanks in his or her own way.” Aldrin read silently from a small card on which he had printed words from the book of John:

I am the wine and you are the branches
Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit;
For you can do nothing without me.

Neil Armstrong had his own ceremony to think about. His mind had been full of suggestions, including passages from the Bible, verses of Shakespeare, etc. The landing was the flight’s greatest achievement, and in Armstrong’s mind, it amounted to the first human contact with the moon. As he thought about the first step he would take from Eagle’s footpad he pondered the inherent paradox—a small step, yet a significant one—and he knew what he would say. “Okay,” he said, ‘I'm going to step off the LM now.” Silently, carefully, he raised his left boot over the lip of the footpad. He spoke: “That's one small step for man”—pause—“one giant leap for mankind.” Looking at this landscape of craters, rocks, and dust he had the feeling that he was seeing a snapshot of a world in steady-state, that if he had been here a hundred thousand years ago or if he returned a million years from now he would see basically the same scene.

Collins would later write of his far-side passages. “I am alone now, truly alone, and absolutely isolated from any known life. I am it. If a count were taken, the score would be three billion plus two over the other side of the moon, and one plus God knows what on this side. I feel this powerfully—not as fear or loneliness—but as awareness, anticipation, satisfaction, confidence, almost exultation.”

As his crewmates settled in for the night in Eagle, Collins was finishing up on his own very long day, covering the windows, and turning out the cabin lights. He was thinking of his days as an altar boy in the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. when he used to snuff out the altar candles after service when he used to snuff out the altar candles after service when he used to snuff out the altar candles after service when he used to snuff out the altar candles after service when the Cathedral was void of worshipers.

Apollo 14: Commander: Alan Shepard Ed Mitchell
Command Module: Kitty Hawk LM: Antares
Moon Orbiter: Stu Roosa
Apollo 14 saw Alan Shepard prepare for his moonwalks in July 1970. For this, his second chance to fly in space, Shepard waited 10 years after his historic Mercury mission in 1961.

As Ed Mitchell sat next to his parents in church on Sunday morning he was confronted by an inner conflict. By the time he reached high school he had concluded that the Creation story was allegory, not literally true as the preachers insisted. His strong interest in math and science only deepened his sense of irreconcilable conflict, for neither side seemed to acknowledge the other. From then on, Mitchell hungered for resolution, and he carried into adulthood a desire to understand the nature of the universe.

About three weeks before the flight, a chance conversation inspired Mitchell to take advantage of the fact that he would become one of the few human beings to leave the planet earth. As some of his colleagues knew, Mitchell had long been fascinated by the study of psychic phenomena, for which neither science nor religion offered a satisfying explanation. He became acquainted some physicians in Florida who shared his interest. Mitchell told them, “Line up some people and we’ll do a little experiment on the flight.” And so they did.

He planned to keep his plan a secret from NASA, knowing that the agency would be completely unreceptive to the idea. He said nothing to his crewmates. Each night of the trip to and from the moon, he planned to perform the experiment. Floating in his sleeping bag, Mitchell pulled out a small clipboard bearing a table of random numbers. Each number designated one of the standard symbols used in ESP experiments: a circle, a square, a set of wavy lines, a cross, and a star.

He saw his Apollo flight as a unique opportunity for an experiment in the paranormal phenomenon of extrasensory perception. In secret, he arranged to transmit mental images to several individuals on earth. And so he did, but on a schedule drawn up before the flight, that did not account for several hours of holds during countdown. As a result, Mitchell’s collaborators at home were not tuned in during his transmission efforts, disrupting the experiment.

After working on the cratered sphere Ed was in the Kitty Hawk climbing away from the moon on the Great Elevator Ride. Ed Mitchell felt a weariness that was not just physical exhaustion but a longing so profound as to be felt in the body. He did not want this moment to end. He and Shepard had just been down there. They had walked on another planet. Mitchell took a long last look. He knew he would never return.

He knew he had been enlightened but in a way he did not understand. In time, it would overshadow even walking on the moon. In it, Mitchell would try to find the seeds of resolution he had longed for all his life. He did not guess as Kitty Hawk coasted toward earth, that Stu and even Al Shepard had tasted their moments of personal discovery.

Stu Roosa, as he continued his solo revolutions around the moon observed that the air to ground transmissions were just plain dull. Roosa had thought he knew what to expect from the moon, but nothing had prepared for what he saw just before Lunar Orbit Insertion, when a thin but enormous crescent moon loomed beyond the windows. On the tape player, just by chance, was one of Roosa’s favorite hymns, “How Great Thou Art.” He couldn’t have asked for better background music:
When I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the works Thy hands have made  
I see the stars; I hear the mighty thunder  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art  

Apollo 15: Commander: Dave Scott        Jim Irwin  
Command Module: Endeavor  
Lunar Module: Falcon  
Moon Orbiter: Joe Allen  

Before the mission, Jim Irwin felt a desire to hold a short religious observance on the moon, but when he mentioned the idea to his commander, Scott quickly turned him off. Ever since they had arrived on the moon, Irwin felt a spiritual quality about the place. Seemingly insoluble problems had come up, and each time they had been resolved. The cord for deploying the central station broke. Irwin prayed for guidance, and immediately he knew the solution was to get down on his hands and knees and pull the cord manually. Then there was the Rover’s rear steering, which had been out of commission yesterday, and nothing they did could fix it. Inexplicably, when he and Scott came out this morning, it was working. He felt a glow inside that whatever problem came up. They would solve it.  

Once again Irwin took a moment to pray. He gave thanks that everything was going so well. He gave thanks too for the discovery of the white rock so remarkably displayed on that pedestal of dust, as if it were being presented to them. On the moon, a favorite biblical passage, a verse from Psalms had drifted through his thoughts like a refrain:  

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills;  
From whence cometh my help?  
My help cometh from the Lord.  

On his final journey home he reflected on the wonderful mental clarity he’d had on the moon, the powerful sense of God’s nearness. He was a nuts-and-bolts man who had come back with something he had never anticipated, the seed of spiritual awakening.  

Apollo 17: Commander: Gene Cernan        Jack Schmitt  
Command Module: America  
Lunar Module: Challenger  
Moon Orbiter: Ron Evans  

Cernan glanced out of the hatch window and saw what he had not witnessed on Apollo 10. On the way to the moon, the sight of earth, like a gemstone suspended in dark water, had held him in awe. It was that sight that brought home the fact that there was nothing at all routine about going to the moon for the second time. He felt as if he were seeing earth as it had appeared in the moment before the Creation, in the mind’s eye of God. Now that he was standing on the moon, immersed in the abyss of space, he felt as though he was looking out from within a dream, and the earth was his link to reality.
Upon returning to the LM Challenger for the final traverse, Cernan unveiled a plaque fastened to the LM’s front landing leg. The inscription on the plaque reads: “Here man completed his first explorations of the moon, December 1972 A.D. May the spirit of peace in which we came be reflected in the lives of all mankind.

He glanced at the earth, high in the southwestern sky, an unmoving, silent witness to a voyage about to begin a long journey back. Once more he spoke, “Godspeed the crew of Apollo 17.” Apollo 17 represented the last acts of lunar exploration that would be done by members of their generation.

With the termination of the moon flights—will they be forgotten? Or in a few centuries from now will they be considered a spiritual experience immersed in mysticism.

The astronauts seem to have been sensitized to the phenomena of “silence”. Recently, when Astronaut Susan Helms was being relieved of her lengthy stay on the Space Station, she was asked about her anticipation to return to earth. In response she expressed her reluctance to leave her world of “silence” (in space). She continued by explaining what “silence” meant to her…

She also reminded her audience that they have gradually relinquished their access to “silence” (without their awareness of having done so).

Spirituality and silence are partners, whether on this planet or in space.
HEGEL’S GEIST AND THE SEARCH FOR THE SPIRITUAL.

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The main goal of my paper is to show the relevance of Hegel’s philosophy of art—his view of art as one of the expressions of the human spirit—in the contemporary secular discourse about art and spirituality.

THE NEED FOR A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF CONCEPTS

Before I try to do this, however, I want to point to a difficulty we all, I believe, encounter when we address and use concepts like “spirit” or “spiritual”. The difficulty arises from the vagueness and ambiguity of these concepts. What do we mean by “spirit”? What do we refer to when we say “spirit”, or “spiritual”? When we use these concepts, we often assume that there is a common agreement about their meaning, a clear definition of what they refer to, when in fact it seems to me that there is not.

These concepts are given different meanings, usually depending on the different contexts in which they are used. They have certain meanings in the religious traditions (be it Christian, Buddhist, or Islamic, etc.), but they have acquired quite different meanings in the secular culture of the past two centuries. They are attributed again different meanings in the contemporary new age movements; and we see artists attributing their personal meanings to “spirit” or “spiritual”.

I do not claim to solve the problem of the ambiguities of these concepts, nor do I claim to offer “the” correct definition or interpretation, which we should adopt when we use them. Instead, I aim at clarifying them by tracing the origins of one of the meanings these concepts have acquired in our culture since the beginning of the XIX century.

I believe that such an historical inquiry into the meanings of ambiguous concepts can tremendously help in their clarification. The meanings of the concepts we use, in fact, are embedded in culture. They do not refer to “essences”, in a Platonic fashion, which are there to be discovered by us, nor are they simply “names” that can be changed or replaced at will. We use the language within a cultural context, in a context of meanings acquired in intellectual and social exchanges and practices.

HEGEL’S GEIST IN HIS “AESTHETICS: LECTURES ON FINE ART”

We can trace a non-religious meaning given to the concepts of “spirit” and “spiritual” back to the German Romanticism, that has had such a strong influence in our way of thinking about art in the past two centuries, and to the parallel philosophical movement of Idealism, which found in Hegel its most complete and articulated expression. Hegel’s view, and his articulation of the notion of “spirit”, had an enormous role, not only in the strictly philosophical, but in the cultural life of the XIX century at large, and has continued to influence philosophers and artists in the XX century. Furthermore, I would venture to say that the familiar, postmodern view of reality as a social and cultural construct has its roots in the Hegelian notion of reality as
the manifestation of the unfolding of human consciousness (but this is beyond the scope of my paper).
The notion of “spirit” (which is the translation of the German word Geist, sometimes also reductively translated as “mind”) has lost in Hegel many of its religious or supernatural connotations, and has been connected to our human activity. According to his view, “spirit” emerges in human history as consciousness and self-consciousness. Works of art are among the products of this conscious human activity upon the external world, ad as such, they are creations of the human spirit.

In the “Introduction” of his “Lectures on Fine Art” Hegel writes:

The universal and absolute need from which art springs has its origin in the fact that man is a thinking consciousness, i.e. that man draws out of himself and puts before himself what he is and whatever else is. Things in nature are only immediate and single, while man, as spirit duplicates himself, in that (i) he is as things in nature are, but (ii) he is just as much for himself; he sees himself, represents himself to himself, thinks, and only on the strength of this active placing himself before himself is he spirit. (Hegel, Knox’s translation, 1975)

The point of departure is the thinking consciousness but this thinking consciousness is not a given, says Hegel, it is not like things in nature, that simply are, it is not the Cartesian thinking (“I think, therefore I am”) which is a given (res cogitans) as much as nature is (res extensa); this thinking consciousness is a process, is an activity, and it is in this active process of thinking that we become conscious, that we acquire consciousness. This active process, as well as the result of it, is what Hegel calls “spirit”. Man is spirit insofar as he “places himself before himself”, that is, insofar as he thinks, reflects upon himself, becomes aware of himself and of his own thinking. Human consciousness arises in the process of reflection and self-reflection, in bringing up to awareness the external world which surrounds us as well as ourselves.

This consciousness of himself man acquires in a twofold way” continues Hegel, “first, theoretically, insofar as he must bring himself into his own consciousness, along with whatever moves, stirs, and presses in the human breast: . . . Secondly, man brings himself before himself by practical activity, since he has the impulse, in whatever is directly given to him, in what is present to him externally, to produce himself and therein equally to recognize himself. This aim he achieves by altering external things whereon he impresses the seal of his inner being and in which he now finds again his own characteristics. Man does this in order, as a free subject, to strip the external world of its inflexible foreignness and to enjoy in the shape of things only an external realization of himself.” (Hegel, Knox, 1975)

Here Hegel gives us the example of a child who throws stones into a pond, and looks at the circles in the water which are the effect of the stone he has thrown, and he understands with amazement and pleasure that those are an effect of what he has done.

So, both the theoretical activity of reflecting upon oneself and one’s environment, and the practical activity of manipulating and altering the external world to make it our own, to
overcome its foreignness and making ourselves at home in the world, are part of the process of acquiring consciousness, part of the human “spiritual” journey. Spirit is this process.

In encountering our own selves in thinking, as well as in addressing nature, in trying to understand nature, as well as in trying to mold it to our own needs, we encounter something that is alien to us, that resists our activity. In each case this alienation, this resistance, is a necessary step in the process of overcoming it. The reconciliation of opposites is one of the key elements in Hegel’s philosophy. Reality is a process, in his view, and at every stage of this process we see the three steps of the dialectical movement, usually referred to as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The antithesis opposes the thesis, but this opposition does not simply resist or try to negate the thesis, in fact, it stimulates the movement toward the overcoming of the opposition, a synthesis (Aufhebung) which is not the sum of the first two terms, that is not a merging of the first two terms, but that pushes the movement forward, that overcomes the opposition and pushes the movement to the next stage.

What is art, within this view? Art is one of the highest expressions of this human activity, both of self-reflection and of manipulation of the external world. It springs, in Hegel’s words, from “... man’s need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again his own self.” (Hegel, Knox, 1975)

And because the work of art is the product of this movement of self-reflection, because the external world has been lifted up to human consciousness, the work of art is “higher than nature.”

a work of art is such only because, originating from the spirit, it now belongs to the territory of the spirit; it has received the baptism of the spiritual and sets forth only what has been formed in harmony with the spirit. ... Therefore the work of art stands higher than any natural product which has not made this journey through the spirit.

The beauty of art is beauty born of the spirit and born again ... (Hegel, Knox, 1975)

In spite of the reference to the Christian ritual of baptism, or the quotation from St. Paul, Hegel has disentangled the notion of “spirit” from Christian theology and has laid the groundwork for the secular interpretation of this concept.

HEGEL AND KANDINSKY

After the substantial influence Hegel’s thought exercised on his contemporaries and the following generation of intellectuals and artists, it enjoyed a strong revival, toward the end of the century, all over Europe. This “come-back” was due partly to a reaction against positivism, which had become the dominant philosophy in the middle and late XIX century. Hegel’s views of the human subject and its freedom, of the reconciliation between man and nature, and his expressivist theory of art, became again central and engaging issues for a new generation of thinkers (Taylor, 1975). As with the romantic generation, we see a strong cross fertilization between philosophers and artists, particularly significant at a time when art was progressively
leaving behind the task of representing nature and was interrogating itself about its own identity.

As documented by John Golding in his volume “Paths to the Absolute”, his Mellon Lectures on Fine Art in 1997, devoted to three European pioneers of Abstractism at the turn of the century, and to four American abstract expressionists in the 1950s, we see a strong influence of Hegel’s thinking—both in Mondrian and in Malevich. This is not surprising, since German idealism and Romanticism were part of the European cultural heritage, and very much alive in the intellectual and artistic circles of the time. When Kandinsky was still in Moscow, in the 1890s, German idealist philosophy dominated the intellectual circles of the Russian capital, and the same was the case in Munich, where he moved in 1896.

We certainly see in Kandinsky a more direct influence of the theosophic movement, in particular of Mme Blavatsky and Rudolph Steiner, and of their somewhat esoteric views of the spiritual and redemptive properties of art. And again, the influence that the theosophic movement enjoyed in those days is clearly another symptom of the reaction against positivism and against what Kandinsky called “materialistic science”, and the “materialism of our age.” In “Concerning the Spiritual in Art” Kandinsky struggles with the concept of “spiritual”, and he never exactly defines the concept; his more direct influences are clearly those of the theosophic movement. Nevertheless, his concepts of “spirit”, “spirit of the time”, “inner necessity”, key concepts in his reflection on art, are firmly rooted in the Hegelian tradition. I will try to support my claim by closely examining Kandinsky’s articulation of the concept of “inner” or “internal necessity.”

In “Concerning the Spiritual in Art”, Kandinsky says that the “inner necessity” to which the artist gives expression in creating art, is built up of three elements:

1. the individual element, the artist’s” “inner spirit” which calls for expression—I claim that this is Hegel’s individual consciousness, or individual manifestation of the unfolding of “geist”.

2. The historical element, the “spirit of the age”, which “every artist”, as child of his age, is impelled to express…”—this, I claim, corresponds to Hegel’s historical consciousness, or historical, age bounded manifestation of the unfolding of “geist”. It is interesting to note that the expression “zeitgeist”, or “spirit of the age”, first used by Goethe, appropriated by Fichte and popularized by Hegel’s generation, plays a very important role in Kandinsky’s theory.

3. The universal level, or the level of art which, says Kandinsky, “is constant in all ages and among all nationalities.”—this third element corresponds to Hegel “absolute consciousness”, or the absolute manifestation of the unfolding of “geist”.

Not only does Kandinsky use Hegelian concepts to expound his view of what inspires and pushes the artist to self-expression. He also uses the Hegelian triadic form, the three step form which, according to Hegel, underlies every aspect of reality.

HEGEL AND WOMAN’S CONSCIOUSNESS
In my conclusion I want to address another issue, that probably has motivated my inquiry since its inception, and that, given the limited scope of this paper, I won’t be able to articulate properly, but only to present as a question, or a series of related questions. This is the issue of “woman’s consciousness,” “woman’s,” not as opposed to, but as different from “man’s consciousness,” which was of course the focus of Hegel’s inquiry.

Can Hegel’s notion of spirit as consciousness and self-consciousness help a feminist approach to explore woman’s “spirit”? Within this view of spirit as human consciousness, where is the place of woman’s consciousness? Is woman’s consciousness included in what Hegel called “man’s consciousness”? Can we just (one possible strategy) change the wording, and use the expression “human consciousness” instead of “man’s consciousness”, without any implications for the meaning of the expression, or do we need to explore woman’s consciousness, as something different? Shouldn’t we avoid the collapsing of the feminine into the genderless “human”, which is actually an enlargement of the concept “man”, and claim that there is a specificity to the “woman” subject?

These questions were first explored, within a Hegelian framework, by the French feminist Simone De Beauvoir in her famous book *The Second Sex* which was published in 1949, and in which she addressed the issue of woman’s subjectivity (or the lack of).

For several decades after *The Second Sex*, the main attitude toward Hegel, among feminist writers, unfortunately amounted to a rejection tout court of his philosophy, on the grounds of the misogynism of his view regarding the place of women in the family and in society, and his apparent exclusion of women from the life of “spirit”.

More recently, several feminist authors, engaged in the reflection on the issue of women subjectivity, or the positing of the woman subject, the self understanding and self-consciousness of women, and also on the larger issues of how to conceptualize identity and difference (Mills, 1996), as well as opposition and reconciliation, have started to confront Hegel’s views in new and interesting ways. (An example of this renewed interest is the volume *Feminist Interpretations of Hegel* edited by Patricia Mills, and published in 1996.)

I suggest that Hegel’s Aesthetics, which places the origin of art in the thinking consciousness of the free subject, in the process of “duplicating oneself” bringing up to one’s consciousness the external world, as well as the inner world, could offer some useful conceptual categories to a feminist inquiry into women subjectivity and “spiritual” experience.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

There have been five major events in my life that have affected me both physically and spiritually. I see “spiritual” as that first definition in the Oxford American Dictionary: “of the human soul or spirit, not physical or worldly.” However, I depart from the second part of that definition, for while I agree that spiritual is indeed not worldly, I do feel that the physical body can be raised to spiritual dimensions through the right actions and events. It is this union of physical and spiritual that intrigues me. The five events that have done this for me are, in order of appearance in my life: visual art, my husband, hiking, my children and, most recently, the martial arts. I term my attachment to each of these as “falling in love,” because my physical body is as affected as my soul, and in just as addictive a way. In this paper, I wish to examine several aspects of the martial arts that echo the values and goals of the visual arts: the development of character in realms that touch upon the physical, the mental and the spiritual aspects within all of us.

The events of September 11 have forced me to rethink this paper. I had originally thought of this paper in connection to our declining education system. However, the terrorist attacks have led me to attach more significance to what we can learn through the martial arts: not just physically (in terms of conditioning and coordination) but in terms of intellectual and spiritual development as well. Since many of us already have strong backgrounds in the visual arts, and we are aware of the significance of the visual arts in our lives and education, I would like to put the stress of this paper upon the martial arts. For the relevance of the martial arts in our lives goes far beyond the “kick-punch” aspect, which is what most non-martial artists recognize from the movies. The art I study, Kosho Shorei Ryu, is probably more akin to the values and skills of the Karate Kid movies, aside from the stress upon tournaments, than it is to Steven Segal or Walker Texas Ranger. (I now look at these programs with new eyes and wonder at their repetitive and predictable moves. Kosho is so much richer in approach and possibilities, not to mention the fact that their ideal of self-defense is no bodily contact at all: that is, escaping with little or no harm to the attacker or to oneself.)

I am only a beginner in this study, only recently promoted to the advanced orange belt. I still have at least four more years of training before achieving a black belt, which is still only a beginning step in a life-long study of Kosho Shorei Ryu. (look to your handouts for more information on this centuries-old form of martial arts). I first began my Kosho lessons in May 2000 after I had become more and more intrigued with my then-six-year-old son’s Little Dragons class and with meeting the Kosho Grand Master, Hanshi Bruce Juchnik. Hanshi’s aim, through seminars and gatherings countrywide, is to unite the various branches of the martial arts. This growing connection among the groups of martial artists and their organizations (through the Martial Arts Collective Society) was especially evident that first weekend after Sept. 11, at a martial arts Gathering which I attended in Pottsville, PA. Although Hanshi himself and several shihans from Canada and the West Coast were unable to make flights to Pennsylvania, the gathering was an awesome success. The level of cooperation, the willingness to learn and the mellow personalities of all involved, (students as well as teachers) was amazing, especially as well over 50% of the participants there had black belts. Many associate a black
belt with egotistical arrogance. What struck me upon my first meeting Hanshi was that there was no arrogance, only a warm and humorous humility. Hanshi’s teacher, our great grandmaster James Mitose (1916-1981) noted in his book, *What is Self-Defense?* that

> The innermost and true spirit of Kenpo lies in humility and self-restraint. It is tremendously effective in building character. Its misuse is strongly discouraged.
> It must be practiced according to one's conscience and the dictates of God. 3

Already you can see the influence of spirituality in Kosho studies, but mental discipline is also as keen as physical exercise. Other concepts from Kosho publications say it all:

> Perfection is the realization that there is no such state…
> Learn to exist in harmony with things and not to be controlled by others…
> Nothing is truly disastrous unless we interpret it so. 4

These statements emphasize the importance of mental control in one’s life. That last quote may explain, even though I was not aware of it, some of the inner strength that I had when facing the September 11 horror. And, in general, what has struck me most about studying Kosho Shorei Ryu is the opening of countless spiritual doors within myself. I have always felt fairly well centered and aware, having practiced yoga and meditation techniques for much of the past 20-25 years. And yet I realize now how little I know and the infinite potential that lies ahead, personally and professionally as well as physically. The black belts in our school, or *dojo*, say the same thing. In fact, the higher the level of one’s belt, the more humble the students become as they realize how much there is to learn.

What has struck me as I prepared for this paper is the character development of those who are advanced students. For those who were quick to temper, now they have more self-control and speak quietly while others yell around them. There is increased sensitivity to others and more humility. For those who were lacking in confidence or were “geeks” in high school, now they are more outgoing, confident and attractive people. A fourteen-year-old boy forsook his friends at the banquet of the recent Gathering to sit with new people. He knew only one other person at the table of eight. This self-confidence, astounding as it is for a young teenager, is common to those young people studying at our dojo in Keene. Furthermore, stories like these abound and even from relative strangers who related stories, in often quite personal depth, for up to one-half hour!

This may give you an inkling (which is all I can share in this short talk, anyway) of the possibilities of character development from studying Kosho Shorei Ryu. Students show greater mental control and spiritual awareness, but there is also the matter of self-defense. Aside from the rare chance that we would be fighting terrorists on a hijacked plane, we are more likely to need defense against ourselves. You might wonder what I mean by that. When was the last time any of us were in a street fight? Often the answer, among our dojo’s students as well as in this room, is low. How many have hurt themselves around their home, bumped into things, fallen down a stair or two, lately? The numbers are much higher. One night in class, we learned a “stair defense” by jumping and landing safely down several stairs. Our Shihan (master teacher) Rick Wilmott, of Wilmott’s Martial Arts Center in Keene, NH, has noted several times that when he has tripped on the stairs, he was able to save himself from falling by just leaping down
the rest of the stairs to the landing or floor below. With more practice, we too may have that skill and ability.

Today, many branches of martial arts have lost the history and multi-disciplinary requirements for advanced black belts. Kosho Shorei Ryu literally means the “Old Pine School of Encouragement.” It dates to 1235 when “a Japanese Buddhist priest meditated under an old pine tree . . . and received enlightenment, as he discovered universal laws and natural principles pertaining to our existence and the resolution of conflict.” Thus we often translate Kosho’s principles as the study of natural law, but I would like to convey it to outsiders as “outwitting one’s opponent using natural law.” Instead of countering an attack (a punch or grab) with a specific block or kick, the options in Kosho can be said to be infinite. At the recent Pennsylvania gathering, I learned about joint locks, pressure points, throws, Tai Chi and kata (forms which one practices to increase one’s skills and muscle memory). Our grand master can move barely a muscle to get out of the way and to down his opponent, and I am certain that he would have been able to disarm the recent hijackers without breaking a sweat. Truly, it seems magical. What is even more amazing is that anyone can train in the martial arts. Artistic “talent” doesn’t count. Instead, what counts is dedication and hard work. And it is this mental discipline and hard work that is another essential dimension of Kosho study.

Let me discuss how we run a sample class and thus demonstrate how knowledge of Kosho works in these three dimensions of personal development: physical, mental and spiritual. First of all, when reciting our 3D creed during the line-up of class, we strive for “Knowledge in the Mind, Strength in the Body and Honesty in the Heart.” Then we have a short meditation (mokuso) followed by a “warm up.” I have always had three or more hours of exercise per week, but I have never been one to run hundreds of miles per week or month. Thus these warm-ups have truly been a challenging conditioning, especially as 18 months ago I had never done even a single push-up. Now a typical warm-up might include 100-200 jumping jacks, 100 push-ups and 100 sit-ups, although often broken up into a pattern 50-50-50, 25-25-25, 25-25-25. Then there are stretches for Japanese yoga flexibility, with one goal being the ability to execute all three kinds of splits. But there is yet another dimension to this physical fitness, which Mitose mentions in his book and which is carried further in the study of shiatsu, the healing arts, which is needed for a black belt. “It is healthful exercise as is evidenced by the long life of the people who practice it.”

These physical exercises during class push us to do what we never envisioned as possible, to reach toward the strenuous testing of shuygo. At our school, or dojo, we do not practice ritual shuygo, pushing you to the very edge of your limits in an extreme and extensive way. However, the tests to pass on to the next belt are quite rigorous, may include up to 200 push-ups as well as all the forms (kata) studied to date, self-defense techniques, weapons work, basic Japanese language and history, among other things, drawn seemingly randomly from everything we have learned. There are no simple study sheets for these texts, such as I give my art history students, for what we need to learn is summed up in one word; “everything.” Furthermore, our shihan is also interested in how we react to what we don’t know, exercising self-control and open minds above all.

All that we are tested upon are what we have learned in class and practiced at home. After the class warm-up, we often line up to practice rolls, strikes, kicks and other moves, including walking on one’s knees (shiko). These are accompanied by “kiais.” These exercises condition
us physically, instilling muscle memory as well as strengthening muscles and developing breath control. But there is a deeper level even at these basic exercises. First of all, sometimes it is quite challenging mentally to remember to complete the defensive check while moving to punch with the other hand into the proper angle of the octagon, which we practice to understand defensive movement. Thus there is the mental discipline even during these ostensibly simple exercises. Furthermore, there is a deeper level of spirituality related to the kiai, which our shihan noted recently as something only truly accessible to those with advanced belts. At my beginning level, all I can do is to sense that the spirituality of the kiai has to do with a connection between breath and spirit. Thus the use of the shouting kiai is a way to go beyond developing breath and muscle strength, for it is a way to strengthen one’s own inner spirit while connecting to that greater spirit around us. The stronger one’s kiai, the greater is the power of one’s strike. Having been shy in the past about such loud shouting, I am only beginning to see its power and potential now. And it will undoubtedly be another couple of years before I fully understand this concept. There is always so much more to learn.

This is only an inkling of the spirituality inherent in this training. In fact, Shihan Wilmott has often said the following: “Martial arts are all about spirituality. It doesn’t matter what you believe, but you must believe in something.”

One of the best class nights is spent in “Mojo’s Cave.” It is an incredible, wandering mediation into a landscape, garden and cave/environment of your own creation. This journey releases emotions, ideas and other underlying layers of being of which we are barely aware in our daily lives. It is an awesome experience, and, like much of this training (including the shiatsu, the healing arts, and shodo, the art of the brush) only grows stronger within you in the days and weeks after that lesson.

The latter part of many classes is spent learning Kosho forms (kata) and self-defense techniques. As we learn to escape, control and counter offensive attacks, we have to learn our brains as well as to trust our instincts and the skills that the body is (slowly) learning. Each night, we may learn several punch or grab techniques that are related to the forms which we are learning that month. The ideal is to be able to do these techniques without really thinking of them, in a state of mushin, “mind without thinking.” At the same time, we learn to focus intently, a skill that can also be integrated into one’s daily work and life. The interrelated quality of what we learn works on physical, mental and spiritual levels in class and, even more importantly, in our daily lives. This richness is just part of the magic of Kosho.

Quite often, it is at this last stage of the class that our shihan will add other concepts and moves that clearly go above the heads of most beginning students. Yet, at the same time, these ideas do sink into the minds of the more advanced students. We beginners realize that we too will also grow to understand these more advanced concepts. This mode of teaching, which strives beyond the basic level, sometimes overwhelms the students but is common to daily life, when we often feel beset by the surfeit of information available today. I do this when I teach, too, often shooting additional information out into art history and humanities classes. Yet I know that some students will capture one point, someone else will catch another point, and yet all should get the points that I have reiterated multiple times during class. By teaching in such a challenging way, students keep awake and learn more by the end of the semester than they had thought possible. It could be said that more challenge (perhaps of this sort) is needed in public schools today.
All of these areas, then, the physical, mental and spiritual, can be essential to the growth of our children as well as our selves. Schools nowadays are renown for lack of discipline, lack of respect, lack of fitness and the prevalence of bullying, among other problems. One suggestion that might work is the introduction of martial arts like Kosho Shorei Ryu into physical education classes at all levels of education, from preschool through college and continuing education. This would work for teachers as well as for students, for who can doubt that many teachers would benefit from the self-confident power and physical techniques in the classroom. And it would also give skills and confidence to those who are often bullied as well as an atmosphere of self-discipline and respect. Introducing more martial arts classes in schools can also increase spiritual self-awareness, thus forming a link with the visual arts, especially in these areas of discipline, knowledge, physical skill and spiritual growth, and proving an essential first step for learning throughout the rest of one’s life.

What Mitose said about Kosho education for young people is evident in the quote below, still quite relevant today, even though it was written nearly fifty years ago:

> The younger generation is tired of being reminded to attend church services, to read the Bible, to do right and shun wrong. A new approach to this problem is needed and Kenpo supplies this approach. As young people learn Kenpo, gradually, almost without their knowledge of what is happening to them, faith in God is instilled in them. Kenpo builds up confidence in them and their characters become molded into something fine, clean and good. Without being forced, they are willing to undertake whatever tasks they are confronted with, and, thereby, they become upright, respectable and law-abiding citizens.

And to take this knowledge of Kosho further into our new lives today, I think we may all be thinking what we might have done in those hijacked planes, or within similar planes in the future. One book I have been reading cites the importance of the “warrior frame of mind.” This includes discipline, honor, integrity, courage, skill, restraint, control, power, all of which are more important now than ever before. And this is true in our daily lives as well as in the military. For many centuries, the Eastern martial arts have been admired not only for their skill and knowledge, but also for their discipline and respect. Perhaps it is now an opportune time to adopt their practices and principles into our daily life, for our great grand master James Mitose began teaching Kenpo to Americans in Hawaii shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. This was the beginning of the martial arts in America.

In 1936, James Mitose (1916-1981) moved, at the age of twenty, from his homeland of Japan to Hawaii. After the attacks on Dec. 7, 1941, Mitose meditated as to whether he should support his original homeland or his new home. Since the bombing was an unprovoked, aggressive act, Mitose decided to aid the Americans and thus began teaching martial arts to the American army in Hawaii from 1942-1946. His friend, Robert Trias, later opened the first karate school on mainland U.S. Perhaps we should follow Mitose’s lead after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and prepare for this new kind of war with training in the ancient martial arts.

I would like to conclude this part of this paper with this quote from my introductory packet of materials.
Close your eyes and imagine the most powerful person in the world. See how deftly he moves. Feel his strength. Share his control. That person lives in the center of each of us, and it is only the millstone we wear—our problems, our pasts, our pain—that mask the grace of our inner movements.

You have come here to learn about this world inside yourself. You have come to take a journey into your own power.¹²

When I first read that, I thought “how cool.” Now I have an inkling that it can indeed be true. There are also several quotes from our great grand master, James Mitose that link the martial arts to the visual arts. At an energy workshop in August of this year, Shihan Wilmott noted that Mitose said that one needs to connect the martial arts to a greater spiritual appreciation of daily life through an awareness of the visual richness around you all the time. This is not an idea that is new to visual artists, for our lives and work depend on truly seeing every day. There are further links between the visual and the martial arts. One of the first things I noticed about the teachers of Kosho was their incredible grace, their litheness. I know now that this is no accident. It comes from years of training, especially in the escaping arts, the deft zigzag and gentle footwork needed to avoid the opponent’s strike. But similar grace has appeared in the visual arts for years, most notably in the height of classical periods like the Renaissance. This summer I visited, with my then seven-year old son Steven, the ducal palace of Urbino. I was immediately struck by how the construction of this palace, from stairs to moldings, recreated the grace of movement that I have also been studying in Kosho.

It was actually a young woman, Battista Sforza, from her marriage at age 14 to her death at the age of 26, who sponsored the creation of this palace. She married Frederico da Montefeltro in 1460. She then hired the men who created the extraordinary balance and grace of this palace. (This is true of the first stage of the palace. The second and third stages get progressively busier and further removed from the essence of beauty evident in early Renaissance forms and in the pared basics of Kosho study.) These portraits of these the Duke and Duchess of Urbino are famous, as are the stories of the profile view of him because of a sword gash on his right side and the paleness of her portrait, because she had already died at a very young age.

The duke and duchess were married Feb. 8, 1460. At only 14, Battista was the second wife of the thirty-eight year old count. Frederico’s marriage to Battista lasted for twelve and a half years and the city of Urbino was changed in the process. The Court soon became a hub of Renaissance culture: mathematicians, legal experts, architects and painters were all welcomed there. Luciano Laurana and Piero della Francesca are two of the most famous Renaissance men who worked at the palace.¹³ Laurana designed and built the new palace which, “with its twin towers [!!!] would become the symbol of a whole area.”[!!!] Battista Sforza became influential in this regard, for she felt that culture should be echoed in daily life and wholeheartedly supported the theories of Laurana and of Piero della Francesca, who, developed clean, elegant lines and forms, in two and three dimensions. In 1472, Battista died at age 26, soon after the birth of “Frederico’s much longed-for son and heir, Guidabaldo.”¹⁴ The princess’ death shook the Court: Laurana left Urbino, abandoning the unfinished palace. The subsequent architect, Francesco di Giorgio Martini, departed from “the inspirational theories behind the building. The rooms built after the princess’ death are less essential,”¹⁵ busier and needlessly elaborate.
It is the stairs of the first section of this palace, the part supported by Battista and designed by Laurana that particularly struck me as I moved through the palace. What is the aspect of architecture that most controls movement? It has to be stairs, for in other rooms and cathedral naves, one can still move, stand, shuffle or stride in whatever rhythm and pace one desires. But stairs control one’s movements more closely, although one can determine the speed at which one climbs. As one climbs or descends a staircase, each step conditions one’s movement by its very height, width and length. Think of the Mayan temples with their high, narrow and steep steps. The very thought of climbing them makes me cringe tightly, watch my balance and breathe heavily. However, the stairs at the ducal palace of Urbino flow with a grandeur that made me feel as graceful and grand as any Renaissance duke or princess. I was amazed that simple stairs could affect one’s movement through space in such a way, and thus affect one’s mood, one’s appreciation of the space and, perhaps, awareness even of the precious moments of one’s daily life. (It was this appreciation of daily life that perhaps motivated Battista to sponsor and create the works she did so that others would feel the peace that she wished them to feel.)

The stairs of this Urbino palace are perfectly proportioned, only a few (three?) inches high and perhaps 8” wide. (Unfortunately, I was not allowed to shoot slides upon my visit, nor did I think to measure the steps precisely.) Nor have I been able to find any visual images of those particular stairs, but the ones designed by Michelangelo for the Laurentian library are similar in height and width and produce some of the same effect. (This was a spot I also visited with my son this past spring. However, Michelangelo’s curved, water-like edges and the tightened, cut-off sides are definitely his own Mannerist contribution and have nothing to do with the Urbino master Laurana.)

The rest of the first part of the palace construction, including the much-photographed courtyard, is similarly simple and elegant, with just enough moldings to accentuate the perfect proportions of the windows, the height of the walls, the design of the ceiling. (Unfortunately, one is not permitted to take photographs at the palace itself, and, with one exception, my shots are drawn only from promotional books and brochures.) One does indeed feel most elegant and privileged to experience these spaces physically as one explores the palace, from the ground rooms to smaller passageways and balconies.

Thus one sees the connection between the physical disciplines of the martial arts and the movement created by classical architecture. The intellectual discipline of the visual arts is present in the analysis of form and content necessary in studio classes as well as within the history of art. This intellectual discipline also reflects the essential ideas underlying the martial arts. Look at the Baptism of Christ by Piero della Francesca in the fifteenth century. This shows the mathematical basis of Italian Renaissance art that is also akin to the martial arts. In the Renaissance, the triangle stands for the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The circle stands for everlasting life, world without end. Note how perfectly proportioned these are within the composition as John the Baptist baptizes Christ. The peace and calm is spirituality at its best in Piero’s work.

These same symbols are also important in Kosho. The triangle represents the three warriors: Justice, Peace and Spirituality. The circle represents the world, from which the yin and yang evolve. The symbolism continues in much more depth, but I have no time to delve into that now. The peace in Piero’s piece is much the same as what we experience in meditation; thus
the links between the martial and the visual arts are indeed closer than we might have realized in the past.

It is this spirituality in both these arts that I find intriguing, invigorating and absorbing. How can we incorporate such spirituality into our daily lives? Perhaps one of the things common to most people each day is movement. Wouldn’t it be nice to feel spirituality in your every move, to be graceful even as you move in your kitchen, shifting your weight from sink to stove, feeling an inner connection you have never felt before? This basic sense of spirituality as revealed through movement is common to both the martial and the visual arts and can, I believe, contribute strongly to the lives of every person. This can be seen in the public schools as well as in growing civilian self-defense. As we ready for unforeseen events in the twenty-first century, we cannot go wrong with a strong foundation in the visual and martial arts.

Let me read one last quote from Mitose:

Kenpo develops confidence in one’s self, builds up good and clean characters in a person, infuses the feeling of faith in God, develops keenness and sharpness of ones eyes, develops ones mind to quick judgment, thinking and concentration. He will be careful when crossing the street, his concentration and quickness in thinking will make him bright in his studies. The art of Kenpo can be useful in business or in your daily task.¹⁰

I think this is also true of the visual arts, which can also enhance one’s daily life through visual awareness of architecture, painting, sculpture and life around you. The parallels between the martial and visual arts can also be extended analytically, for the 45 degree angle of many flying buttresses is exactly the same angle as is appropriate for Kosho’s defensive blocks. The absorption which one feels in a concert can relate to the state of mushin, mind no mind, when one absorbs what is around one without “thinking” about it. The state in which most artists work may lie between meditation and mushin.

These are only some of the ways, and only an inkling of the possible richness, in which the visual and the martial arts can affect all of us in ways that are physical, mental and spiritual. Both areas of the arts have transformed my life and they can transform yours as well, especially in these times that promise difficulties of all sorts ahead of us.

NOTES

². Brochure for The 2001 East Coast Gathering, September 15 and 16th, Pottsville, PA.
³. James M. Mitose, What is Self-Defense? (Kenpo Jiu-Jitsu) ISBN: 0-939556-00-6, 1953. Although the title here refers to Kenpo and Jiu-jitsu, we now refer to the school that Mitose continued as Kosho Shorei Ryu. However, the present grand master Hanshi Bruce Juchnik’s goal is to unify the various branches of the martial arts; he has made progress toward this goal with the establishment of the Martial Arts Collective Society.
⁴. Kosho Shorei Ryu Gakesei No Benran (Student Handbook/Notebook) (Keene, NH: Wilmott’s Martial Arts Center, 1999).
⁶ Mitose, p. T.

One might fear that bullies would benefit from knowledge of the martial arts, but the impulsive and cruel character of bullies suggests that they will not be patient and humble enough to last through training. If they did last, their characters might indeed change to show the respect and modesty that no longer characterizes bullies.


“Mokuso: meditation (often at the beginning of class)

Mushin: a state of “mind without thinking”

Sensei: senior teacher

APPENDIX

Kosho Shorei Ryu is a martial art that dates to about 778 when Shozen Daishi was born in Japan. In 799, he built the Shaka-In to enshrine a statue of Shaka, a Buddhist deity. The temple grew to include over 100 buildings. In 1235, a Buddhist monk meditated under a pine tree at the Shaka-In to reconcile the concepts of pacifism as promoted by Buddhism and the destruction characteristic of the martial art he was also studying. He developed the ideal of a self-defense that involved no body contact. This new martial art has since been passed down from grand master to grand master. Kosho Shorei Ryu translates as The Study of the Old Pine Tree School of Encouragement. It encourages a study of natural law to understand movement, balance and self-defense moves to surpass opponents with as little physical contact as possible. Great Grandmaster James M. Mitose, (1916-1981) brought the martial arts from Japan to Hawaii. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he began teaching the American armed forces in Hawaii. He was the twenty-first generation descended from the Buddhist monk of 1235.

Hanshi Bruce Juchnik: the current Grand Master of Kosho.

Shihan Rick Wilmott of Wilmott’s Martial Arts Center in Keene, NH. He is my teacher. The eleven other Kosho shihans and many other senseis are situated around the country and in Canada.

dojo: a classroom “place of learning”
gi: karate uniform
joshu: instructor’s assistant
kai: the official school or center of Kosho
kata: the forms one learns
kempo or kenpo: fist law (which evolves into karate)
ki or chi: inner energy
kiai: a shout used when striking
mokuso: meditation (often at the beginning of class)
shiatsu: study of healing arts
shihan: master instructor
shodo: study of brushwork
shuygo: pushing oneself beyond one’s limits through extensive physical exercise
seiza: kneeling position used for meditation
shihan: one of the twelve master teachers under Hanshi Bruce Juchnik.
Sho Chiku Bai: the symbols of Kosho Shorei Ryu seen in a patch on members’ gis: Pine, Bamboo and Plum, all of which have multiple levels of meaning.

The study of Kosho Shorei Ryu includes these areas:
Mediation
Japanese Yoga
Controlling Arts (Keishu)
Destructive Arts (Hoken)
Escaping Arts (Kigan)
Healing Arts (Shiatsu)
Weapons: Escrima (short sticks), Iaido (art of drawing sword), jo (4’ staff)
Shodo (brushwork/calligraphy)
Kosho history

See the web site for more information on Kosho, its modern and ancient history, and many more links: http://www.uconect.net/~koshoryu/ksryo.html
THE SEVEN-BRANCHED LAMP: THE MENORAH OF ANCIENT ISRAEL AND ITS COVENANTAL SIGNIFICANCE

Maurice Schmidt
Texas A & M University

MY METHOD OF RESEARCH

It was in 1987 when I began in earnest to do my research into the tabernacle structures that I formulated the thesis developed here: that the lamp (Hebrew: Menorah) of the Tabernacle was both a symbol of Israel’s cornerstone covenants with G-d and somehow, in its geometry, also a reflection, or abstracted map or echo of the design of the Tabernacle units. I was convinced that its knob, cup and flower motif decorations occurred at key points germane to both the lamp itself and also to the overall structure in which it served and were not merely dictated by design in the modern sense of having no organic relationship to anything but itself.

Using independent and authoritative rabbinical references to check the accuracy of my own conclusions about the descriptions in the Biblical text, I have found what I believe to be a startling confluence of ancient aesthetic concepts common to the sacred art and architecture of ancient Egypt and Greece and perhaps other cultures and Talmudic (rabbinic) interpretations and visualizations of the Biblical texts pertaining to the only two works of art described in detail in sacred Scripture—the Tabernacle of Exodus and the Temple of Solomon in the Book of First Kings (chapter Six)

I hope that my work inspires further study both in advancement and correction, if necessary of the thesis here presented; that the Israelite nation fashioned a rich liturgical art tradition as unique, complex, and beautiful as any other and of seminal influence upon the art and architecture of both Christianity and Islam.

The unique quality of Israelite art as manifested in the Tabernacle complex lies chiefly in its creation of a unity of imageless geometric forms and spaces derived from ancient Egyptian sacred art and architecture, yet designed so as to be competitive with the image laden and theatrical religious rites of surrounding cultures. Such a unity could only be accomplished by art that is both abstract and suggestive of organic life including the human form. In its materials, craftsmanship and design, it required levels of artistry of the highest order. To create from the old an art and ritual expressive of a single, unique, formless, eternal, and loving G-d, for the first time in history was a task involving the most serious and painstaking weaving of the philosophical moral with the symbolic and aesthetic.

In Israelite art, there emerges no symbol of earthly power or might. Nothing exists like those art forms symbolic of the empires whose art is defined by imagery such as the demon or warrior gods that dominate the worldly empires. Even the lion, symbol of Judah, does not appear in ancient Israelite liturgical art and later only as a minor decorative element, never as a temple guardian. In creating an art and ritual reflective of the one covenantal G-d, formless yet all-powerful, eternal yet loving and personal, ancient Israel gives monotheism its earliest visual expression. Herein lies its originality and the Israelite contribution to world art.
PART I

Mirror Image Fires of Covenant

“And there shall be six branches going out of the sides thereof: three branches of the candlestick out of the one side thereof, and three branches out of the other side thereof:...”
(Continues with description of knops, flowers and cups made like almond blossoms.)

“And see that thou make them after their pattern which is being shown thee in the Mount.”

The most obvious symbolic feature of the (Menorah - Hebrew) seven-branched lamp is its construction in replicated halves, as a mirror image. Reflecting its two equal halves, separated by a single dividing line, its design is the paired symbol of covenant seen throughout the Bible. In this regard too it replicates both the human body and the vertebrate animals used as offerings on the altar. The Ten Commandments, enshrined nearby in the Holy of Holies, are also graved upon two stone tablets, forming a pair symbolic also of covenant, which denotes an agreement of consent equally binding upon two parties. The lamp’s leftward placement in the body of the Tent of Meeting imparts to it a symbolic relationship to the human heart.

At the Passover ritual, each person breaks a Matzoh (unleavened cake) in half and places the bitter herb and an apple, nut, and wine mix (charoseth) between the halves and eats it. This simple ritual is part of Israel’s remembrance of its Egyptian bondage and G-d’s covenant of redemption.

The Menorah (candlestick) was placed in the leftward side, to the south in the second part of the Tent of Meeting (Mishcan in Hebrew, also called “Holy Place”) before the “Holy of Holies.”

In Exodus 25:31-40, we learn the details of its construction and that it was to be hammered complete from a single ingot of gold “...the whole of it one beaten work of pure gold.”
At eighteen handbreadths in height, the lamp stood approximately four and one half feet to six feet depending on whether the handsbreath measure used three inches or four inches Hammered from one talent of solid gold, it weighed about one hundred pounds.

The Menorah is constructed as a mirror image, each side a replica of the other as are the animals for offering and mankind. The symbolism of the halves denotes covenantal agreement equally binding between two parties, evoking the “covenant of the halves between G-d and Abraham and finally the two tablets of the Law, the covenant at Sinai between G-d and all Israel, His people.

FORMS OF THE LAMP

Almost universally familiar as having curved branches and arching upwards from its central stem, there is in fact another conception of the lamp’s form put forth by two of the foremost Rabbinic authorities: Rashi and Maimonides. In their conception, the branches extended in straight, diagonal lines out of the central stem, forming a triangle instead of a series of arches. As both the arched branches and the diagonal branches have rabbinic authority, I have included both versions in my illustrations. (See Appendix A: Some Aesthetic-Symbolic Questions Raised by Arched Branch versus Diagonal Branch Conceptions.) Since there is no
dispute as to the general proportions or number of branches, the symbolic-geometric relationships I have found work equally well in either version.

Except for the central stem of the lamp, I have omitted the placement of knops cups and flowers on the six branches. Here too authoritative opinions differ somewhat as to their exact placement. I believe that further research will bear out my opinion that their placement was at key points corresponding to those on the central stem and also relating to key points in the Tabernacle structure such as:

- the entry to the Outer Court,
- the ramp of the Altar of Offering,
- the Altar of Offering,
- the Entrance to the Tent of Meeting,
- (and inside the Tent of Meeting)
- the Altar of Incense,
- the entrance of the Holy of Holies,
- the Ark of the Tablets.

As will be seen in my illustrations, the knops, cups and flowers along the central stem form a line or rope whose decorations occur at seven key points, creating a coded map for the layout of the most sacred elements of the Tabernacle. In this regard, the central stem of the lamp forms a symbolic “knotted rope” used by the ancient Egyptians for laying out canals as well as the corners for pyramids, temples, and palaces. Undoubtedly Moses used such a rope in laying out the Tabernacle. Such laying out of sacred buildings would have been accompanied by great ceremony as the Egyptians sacrificed an offering at every corner laid out for a sacred building.

DEFLECTION OF THE AESTHETIC

A telling feature of the lamp agreed upon by virtually all rabbinic authorities is that the lamp rested upon a base (some say “round,” others say “square”) from which three animal feet extended, forming a tripod support for the lamp. As to which animal’s feet were used, again there are differences of opinion. My own guess is that they were goat or ram’s feet, but the lion foot would also be a good candidate. What is most interesting is the rabbinic agreement on the tripod concept instead of the more logical and more stable support of four feet. In this agreement, I read once again that consistent Judaic tendency to diminish or deflect the aesthetic impact in sacred art in such a manner as to make an object less likely to become an object of devotion, i.e. idolatry. Strictures against full figure statuary as opposed to a bust, hands with four instead of five fingers in traditional Passover Haggadahs reflect this consistency of aesthetic diminution. Of all the elements making up the Tabernacle, the covenantal Ark with its cherubim cover, and the sacred Tablets and the seven-branched lamp were the most likely objects to be subjected to idolatrous veneration. Especially the Menorah has about it a resemblance to a living being, a sacred pole or tree (Asherah—Hebrew). But with three feet instead of four, it looks like an animal with a part missing, or somehow a misconstructed form—blemished and therefore unfit for veneration in the manner of idols. Brokenness rendered god statues unusable for worship; another reason the Commandments were graven upon two tablets, most likely split from a single slab. In choosing where and how to diminish visual elements evocative of idol worship yet retain an object’s power and beauty, Israelite art demonstrates its most profound insight into the realms of aesthetics and symbolism.
SUMMARY OF COVENANTS EMBODIED IN THE LAMP

These are the covenants of G-d that would have been known to Israel, the children of Jacob, before they went into Egypt and are embodied in the seven-branched lamp. They form, along with the revelation at Sinai, the central core of Judaism.

G-D HALLOWS THE SEVENTH DAY

“And G-d blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because in it He rested from all his work which G-d in creating had made.”

The seven lamps and their branches are an obvious reference to the Creation chapter in Genesis as well as a symbol of the sacred seventh or Sabbath day consecrated in the Decalogue at Sinai.

The rainbow is a symbol of G-d’s covenant with Noah, his descendants, and all mankind.

“I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth…. When I bring the clouds over the earth. …and the bow is seen in the cloud, that I will remember my covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh:”

These covenantal passages establish the groundwork of a universal, loving, and merciful G-d in Judaism.

As a symbol of the rainbow covenant, the arched branches are more fitting than the diagonal branched concept—which here becomes problematic. Maimonides comments on the rainbow’s position in the sky with its two ends downward toward the earth as if G-d, the warrior is making peace with the earth by inverting his mighty bow and touching it to the ground. I have read that American Indians of the plains made this exact gesture with their bows to establish cessation of war.

Whether arched or straight—both lamp concepts with their seven lights would still embody the seven spectrum colors seen in a rainbow—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

The fact that green inhabits the center of the rainbow and would therefore occur at the central stem of the lamp (see illustration of title page) has long struck me as symbolically significant. Of all the colors in the rainbow, only green does not belong to the heavens but to the earth where it connotes always, life and its rebirth in spring. For purposes of agriculture, the cessation of rain is just as necessary as it is falling as harvest can only proceed on dry crops. The rainbow is a sign of G-d’s beneficent contract between Himself, mankind and heaven and earth.

“While the earth remaineth seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

The Covenant of the Halves

In these words of Genesis between G-d and Abraham, we are given a summary of Abraham’s (Abram) past, his personal destiny, and a prophecy of the future destiny of his descendants—their bondage in Egypt, G-d’s promise of redemption, and finally the inheritance of Canaan. A
wonderful awesomeness and grandeur suffuse these covenantal passages. It is the first of the
covenants wherein G-d’s speech and fire conjoin; a pattern that recurs with increasing import
and intensity. For symbolic interpretation in relation to the lamp, I call the reader’s attention to
the offering itself from which it gains its name:

And He said unto him: ‘take Me a heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of
three years old, and a ram of three years old…’ and he took him all these, and
divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the others;…”

Three cloven hoof animals, each three years of age, are chosen and cut in half. This passage
conveys two images of three, the animals and their age, which are then halved and placed “over
against the other” so that each half lies directly across from its counterpart. Then in (Genesis
15: 17) a fire passes between the pieces and consumes them as if it were a central stem passing
between its halves. The mirror image design of the seven-branched lamp is an ideal visual
expression of this covenant. Even the tripod feet supporting the lamp can be considered part
of the symbolism in this covenant. The covenant of the Halves in verse 17 alludes to that ultimate
future covenant at Sinai—at the smoking mountain on fire like a furnace. The generation of
artisans who had made the lamp were themselves witnesses to the fulfillment of this
culminating covenant described in (Exodus 19:17-18).

And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet G-d;… now
Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in
fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace…

The majestic scene culminates in (Exodus 20) through the revelation of the Ten
Commandments in which the seventh day is made the sacred Sabbath forever.

Prior to the Sinaitic Covenant are two events that must be addressed: The Binding of Isaac,
which is the covenantal event establishing the destiny of Abraham and his Israelite
descendants, and G-d’s call to Moses at the Burning Bush. In this intimate encounter, quite
lengthy for a Biblical dialogue, Moses is addressed by G-d to be His messenger of deliverance
for His people. The ebb and flow of Moses’ hesitancy and questioning is a wonderful expression
of uncertainty before a momentous decision. Again it is a dialogue in the midst of a fire, which
is reminiscent of the “Covenant of the Halves” and a prelude to the “mountain all on smoke”
at Sinai in which Moses is no longer the hesitant shepherd reluctant to let go of a good but
routine life. In the later scene, Moses walks directly up the Mount into and past the smoke and
the fire to receive the Commandments from G-d’s hand.

The seven-branched lamp is a perfect symbol of a plant that burns but is not consumed. The
Burning Bush episode can be linked to the lamp’s symbolic motifs because of its obvious
resemblance to a plant with stems growing out of a central branch. There are actually such
plants in Israel and I have seen similar plants in South Texas. The variety native to Israel “is a
type of sage (salvia) called moriah in Hebrew.” Biblical description (Exodus 25-36) of the lamp
speaks of its botanical elements; “branches, calyxes, petals, and cups,” and ancient Jewish
sources hint at a direct relationship between the Menorah and a specific plant.”

At this point it may be well to mention that there are seven sacred plants in the Jewish liturgy:
wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. The only plant specifically
mentioned as a part of the lamp however is the almond blossom. This blossom, its bud and its
flower, are an integral part of the lamp. Rabbinic authorities see the significance of the almond
blossom in that it is the first edible fruit to ripen in spring in Israel. It is another example of the
lamp’s importance as a symbol of renewal and forms yet another link with G-d’s promise to
Noah after the Flood.

The lamp’s symbolic connection to the “Binding of Isaac” (Akedah-Hebrew) is more tenuous
than to the other covenants of Israel. Yet there may be some symbolism in its plant-like form
and the rescuing event that takes place at the critical moment when G-d stays Abraham’s hand.
The ram caught in a thicket is substituted for Isaac. Can we see in the seven-branched lamp
some combination of a thicket of plants, the geometric curves of ram’s horns, and the flames of
fire, which recall the burnt offering, which culminates the event?

Summary of Covenants Embodied In the Seven-Branched Lamp and Which Were Part of
Israel’s Heritage at the Time of the Exodus
(Genesis 1) G-d brings forth creation in six days, and
(Genesis 2:3) G-d hallows the seventh day which becomes the Sabbath
(Genesis 9:13-14) G-d establishes the rainbow with its seven-bands of color as a peace symbol
between Heaven and Earth, G-d and man and all living things.
(Genesis 15:5-15) Covenant of the Halves. G-d predicts the destiny of Israel, Abraham’s
descendants in the consumption of an offering of three hooved animals, each three years old.
G-d predicts Israel’s bondage, redemption and the inheritance of Canaan. Symbolism: The fire
of the lamp’s central stem igniting the halves.
(Genesis 22 1-19) Binding of Isaac (Akedah–Hebrew). G-d’s final consecration of His covenant
with Abraham and his descendants through his son, Isaac. Symbolism—the ram caught in a
thicket and given in place of Isaac as a burnt offering.

(Exodus 3:1-22) and (Exodus 4:1-17). G-d’s call to Moses at the Burning Bush. The lamp’s
resemblance to plant forms is relevant here. The bush that burns but is not consumed would be
symbolized by the seven-branched lamp. Moses is called upon to fulfill G-d’s covenant with
Abraham and bring Israel to its inheritance in Canaan.

(Exodus 19:17-18) Moses brings the people to the smoking mountain on fire like a furnace to
hear G-d’s voice and declare the Ten Commandments. Symbolically this event brings to a
mighty crescendo the covenants of the voice of G-d out of the fire beginning with the Covenant
of the Halves (Genesis 15:17) and also harks back in time to the creation (Genesis 2:3) wherein
“G-d blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, … because… He rested from all his work…”
The covenant at Sinai alludes in its consecration of the Sabbath to the Creation itself, wherein
G-d first hallows the seventh day. It also brings to a close the covenantal series of G-d’s voice in
the fire. These two references to the seventh day and to G-d’s voice in the fire are embodied
symbolically in the lamp by its seven stems aflame; six branches emerging from a central
branch in their midst. Sinai is the only covenant, which was witnessed personally by the
artisans who fashioned the seven-branched lamp.

The repetition of these interweaving covenantal themes with their diminution and
magnification, similar animal and fire manifestations, the use of the harmonic number seven
and their intimacy in combination with majesty echo a repetition of theme and melody,
diminuendo and crescendo that call to mind a construction more akin to classical music than to prose or even epic poetry.

To ancient peoples whose primary sources of knowledge were not from reading but from direct sensory perception, the abstract patterns of geometry underpinning natural forms, could suggest many phenomena and ideas simultaneously. Indeed this simultaneity of experience offered by the visual symbol is the single and chief superiority of the visual symbol over the spoken or written word. A cross, a star, a flag, a gravestone evoke a multitude of memories and themes both specific and general, collective and personal. No army has ever marched into battle following a book. Even ancient Israel, when following the Ark of the Tablets from camp to camp and into battle was not led by the words written in stone but by the memories of G-d’s redemptive power symbolized by the Ark itself.

The Tabernacle of Exodus, its structures, vessels and attendant rituals is the first recorded effort of the use of aesthetics in opposition to all forms of nature worship or idolatry. To make aesthetic forms in homage to the formless G-d of a people steeped in the most sophisticated forms of image worship is a vast undertaking and demands not only new forms but changing the relationship of familiar forms. To the already heightened sensitivity to the messages of forms and spaces, and the meaning of patterns of an unlettered people of herdsmen and artisans every kind of altered juxtaposition can alter meanings.

As will be demonstrated, the geometric golden section proportions and relationships common to so much ancient art and architecture are also evident in the seven-branched lamp as in the structures of the Tabernacle and furnishings of which it forms a part.

This evidence of conscious artistry appears in ancient Israelite art but not as overwhelmingly as in ancient Greece, more than eight hundred years later, nor in the grand scale of Egypt, a thousand or more years earlier. In keeping with its characteristic deflection of the aesthetic in deference to the Divine and the Divine teaching, the flame arising from the lamp’s golden stem and paired branches is a materialization of the voice of Israel’s covenantal G-d, which speaks to the human heart in “the still, small voice.” The voice echoes from Noah to the patriarchs, to Moses, to the prophet Elijah, to be expressed finally in Zechariah’s vision of the seven-branched lamp taking oil from olive trees. In the seven flames appear seven words: “Lo B’khayil v’lo B’koakh ki im b’rukh.” “Not by might nor by power but by My spirit.”

Part II
The Seven-Branched Lamp: Motifs, Materials and Workmanship

In the complexity of its symbolism, the Menorah may well be the richest symbolic object in all of art. Aesthetically, it is as beautiful as any work of its kind—that is of a decorative, religious nature. Certainly it is unique, having neither precedent nor antecedent in the art of any other civilization. The Menorah, especially in its arched or curved configuration, is the only liturgical object the Israelites made which cannot be traced in origin to the artistic forms of Egyptian, Mesopotamian or to any other civilization, nor does it appear in the art of later civilizations. Unique to the Jewish people, the Menorah appears to have neither ancestor nor descendants in all the history of art. Its appearance on ancient Israelite coinage establishes the lamp as Israel’s most beloved symbol.
The “knop and flower” motif specified for the branches of the lamp can be traced to the budding and flowering columns of Egyptian temples which symbolize growth and renewal, “as a grouped collection of budding or flowering stalks…” Like the Egyptians, the Israelites also wove the designs of important and symbolic plants into their religious art. As stated earlier, the almond bud and flower is the earliest food plant to ripen in Spring in Israel (Canaan). As the lamp was kindled in the evening, the seven lights of the lamp were also symbolic of the luminaries in the evening sky: moon, stars, and the seven planets known to the ancient world.

Its only resemblance or kinship to any other object may be its superficial resemblance to the ancient Egyptian “ANKH” sign. The ANKH sign is almost as rich in its geometry as the Menorah but their kinship may also lie in the meaning of the ANKH. The ANKH sign is a symbol of “life” or “long life” and it is interesting that the numerical measurements of the Menorah (eighteen handbreaths high) also embody this meaning. Eighteen is the numerical symbol in Judaism for “life” because it is the sum of the letters forming the Hebrew word for life. Because the Hebrew numerical system is derived from its alphabet (each Hebrew letter has a numerical value as did ancient Greek letters), the symbolic intent of the Menorah’s “eighteen handbreadths” measurement may be assumed.

The Menorah was made of solid gold, the material with the most G-d-like characteristics: permanence, unchangeableness, imperviousness to harm from time or elements.

Of equal importance however, is the manner in which it is made of “beaten work.” Here again how the “thing” is achieved is as much a part of the work as its final appearance and use. Shaping metal by beating it with hammers is an arduous and painstaking labor demanding as much of the will and dedication as of skill from its practitioners.

Yet there are in the characteristics of beaten metal work, qualities, one can even say moral qualities that would not have been overlooked by the ancient mindset. Many of these aspects of beaten work reflect Judaic values, being almost perfect metaphors for some of Judaism’s most basic precepts. It is for these reasons that all the holiest objects of the Tabernacle service were to be made of beaten gold.

The craftsman of metalwork knows that no form of metal work has the structural integrity and physical strength of beaten metal. It is solidified in its compressed molecular structure by each blow of the craftsman’s hammer, even as it expands in size. Even today, the hand-forged blade is the most highly prized, as it was and is now in every civilization. Hammered vs. Cast Metal

There are lessons to be drawn from a comparison with cast metal, which must have a hollow core and whose “finish” or “patina” is not derived from the actual working of the metal but by chemical and polishing techniques.

Foremost is the fact that the “Golden Calf” was of cast metalwork. It was necessary to separate the gold work objects of the Tabernacle from this supreme blasphemy of Israel. It could not be done by choosing a baser metal in substitution for gold, but rather by a vastly different form of workmanship. Also, it should be recalled that Moses, as part of the destruction ritual of the Golden Calf, pounded or hammered the idol into fine powder.
Yet another point about casting needs to be made. There is about the casting process, an element of mystery very conducive to idolatry. No one who has ever worked metal in the casting process, as I myself have done, can escape the mystical thrill of its effect. There is an intense ritual about the entire process. The molten metal is heated in the furnace until the perfect time, the moment of pouring. Everyone involved is gathering about the fiery altar of the smelting furnace. The Golden Calf, it should be remembered, was made in front of all the people. Then, with a precision bordering on the sacred in its solemnity, the molten metal is lifted from the jaws of Molech (the fiery furnace) and borne aloft in a bucket, exactly as a sacrifice and as the Ark of the Tablets, by men suspending it on staves. Carefully, the metal is poured into the mold, the egg, or womb from which it will emerge magically transformed. Hot gases are released, smoke fills the air; sometimes red-hot metal flashes out and drips like blood before it hardens, looking like dried blood. The scene is a miniature of a volcano, even of Sinai when covered by the darkness and smoke and flashing lightening of the revelations of G-d’s voice. “…and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace…”

When the cocoon is broken open, the graven image emerges, exactly like any newborn of the animal kingdom: ferocious and unfinished in appearance, covered with scales and bound the with cords by which it took on flesh and breathed out smoke and fire. Its sprues and vents, like an umbilical cord, must now be cut and the newborn is filed, polished, and finished. To see the image emerge from its mold affects all who see it, no matter how many times they have seen it or done it, or how much of any kind of education they have had. People cheer and the excitement of a spectator sport consumes us even as we break apart the mold, and, when we examine the image, if it comes out whole, it was as when Joseph appeared to the Egyptians and they bowed down and said, “Abrech.”

The casting process is unmistakably evocative of death and resurrection then found throughout ancient pagan religions. In casting, a form passes from a material less permanent and less precious to its transformation. Indeed, it is resurrected into a material far more permanent and prized. Its form is the same, but wax or clay has become bronze or gold. It is interesting how the process itself also alludes to death. The temporary wax form drains out like blood, and vaporizes like flesh into dust, as the mold is heated to receive metal, the new, permanent body. While it may be too speculative to think that the very notion of resurrection or the passage of man from earthly to eternal life first grew out of the casting process, we cannot separate the influence of process from artifact on the minds of the ancients. The form of the Calf, emerging in its golden splendor, magically transformed in the fiery furnace from the base material of its origin must have presented an awesome challenge to the plain stone tablets carried by Moses, their words not even visible to the masses of Israel.

How altogether different is beaten work? First of all, it is greater in strength, having the same if not greater strength at its core or heart as at its surface. For this, the process is itself a metaphor on that integrity demanded by the Torah, that the work of our hands reflect the feeling in our heart. The process of hammered work is void of illusion or any suggestion of magic. One sees all that is happening and knows how and why. The hammers press the metal into shape not unlike the pressing of clay or dough into a desired shape. As tedious (and loud) to watch as it is to do, people seldom gather to watch the creation of a hammered work from beginning to end. In comparison to casting, the spectator value of hammering metal is nil.
But how different for the craftsman who is creating the work. His feelings are full of excitement and joy. Knowing that each blow leaves its indelible print on the metal, to shape it, to strengthen it, to finish its surface. The slightest angle or twist of his wrists, analogous both to Torah scribe and Torah study, has its definite meaning in the final scheme of the work. It is a labor that continues daily over a long time, unlike casting, which is the labor of the moment. The work of the caster climaxes in a dramatic crescendo, while that of the hammersmith finishes, as simply as it began, with the tap of a hammer. The evil deed, like cast metal, is done in the flash of a moment, but goodness takes a long, quiet labor to bear its fruit.

THE CAST VERSUS THE HAMMERED

The cast work has a secret life fitting for an idol like the Golden Calf. Its inside is vastly different from its outside. Break open a cast object and one finds its insides are like that of a living thing: hollow, dark, rough, cavernous spaces full of supporting structures: the whole giving no sense of its outside form. I know of a sculptor who welds a bronze heart inside his large, public bronzes.

The cast form is also in its process analogous to conception and birth. The molten metal pours into the mold vessel like semen, and a newborn image is midwifed into existence. The shell of the mold, its womb, must be carefully opened and the cast form, like the newborn, makes its entry, whole, flawed, or in some cases aborted altogether. It is covered with grime from the mold. It is bound in the umbilical cords of its own metal—flesh, its vents, which allowed gasses to escape, and its sprues like veins and arteries, guided the molten blood to the proper points for dispersion. These all must be severed and removed, and their scars finished over.

Here it is fitting to note the Asher Yatzar. “Since G-d was so kind as to provide us with a functioning body, we must thank Him for this good. After each time one attends a call of nature, he should say the blessing:

Blessed are you, O G-d our Lord, King of the universe, who formed man with wisdom, and created in him many openings, many hollows. It is revealed and known before Your Throne of Glory that if one of them would be closed, or if one of them would be opened, it would be impossible to survive for even an hour. Blessed are You, O G-d, Healer of all flesh, and Miraculous in deed.

The hammered work, in contrast, is the same on its inside as outside, as the spirit of man is supposed to be. The Tabernacle had the same colors and materials inside as out. The cast form is like flesh and blood that passes away, while the hammered form is within and without like the spirit of a righteous person.

The metal caster places all his hope and skill in the outcome of a single, climactic event. In contrast, the hammersmith is a lone workman possessed of a long vision. In his inherently undramatic and lengthy labor, he puts his trust in a work that to an outsider appears to be an eccentric and unnecessarily laborious ritual, but the one practicing trusts to the final fulfillment of a vision. The hammersmith’s work is metaphorically like the man of quiet faith, like Abraham.
Are there not analogies here to the ongoing practices of Judaism? The hammersmith works as a religious Jew prays, on a daily basis, undramatically. To the stranger, the religious service of traditional Jews appears confused, devoid of feeling, perhaps, often loud or cacophonous, like the workshop of the hammersmith. Yet as if in ratio to the lack of drama his work inspires in the outsider, the traditional prayer service of the religious Jew fills him with meaning and clarity, calmness and well being, a knowledge that he is part of G-d’s eternal purpose.

Its complete lack of mystery, its perfect structural integrity, and its demand for continuous labor rather than the peak moment of a sacrament or rite made “beaten work” the chosen process for the creation of the Menorah and other holy vessels.

And how exactly might the Menorah have been made? Perhaps the metal was poured into an open sand mold just to establish its basic shape. This truncated and pitted mass would awe no one, but would facilitate the labor of the hammersmiths.

From this massive, short and thick-bodied Menorah, the artisans would draw forth the beautiful proportions and shapes of the final work perhaps hammering to the chanted rhythms of psalms, much as sailors rowed and did their labors to the tunes of sea chanties.

In an atmosphere surrounded by the teachings of G-d sung to poetic beats, the artisans and people together could watch their holy objects emerge in a rhythm and continuity that reflected the daily reality of their lives.

POLISHING BY THE HAMMER: FINISH AND EFFECT

The final surface of the Menorah could have been left with tiny hammer marks, a surface similar to that of a many-faceted diamond. It would refract light in a similar way. But this kind of surface would appeal more to the modern aesthetic. My speculation is that the Menorah was hammered to a perfectly smooth surface, that there was no mixture of hammered and smooth surface. Furthermore, I speculate that the form of each branch may have been cube-like, or square through its diameter. This should not to be confused with the overall shape of the lamp. The cube-like branch, rainbow form, and organic buds and flowers make a highly aesthetic combination, and also are consistent with the geometric vocabulary of the Tabernacle.

The Menorah’s base was either a square or a cube supported like so many temple and palace objects of ancient Egypt, upon brass (or gold) ram’s feet and hooves, (one at each corner). Under a tripod of three golden hooves would be protecting shoes of lesser metal than gold, probably silver; details, so common then, would have no need to be written into the Torah’s description.

Because of the method and material of its manufacture, the overall effect of the Menorah’s beaten surface would have an aura of incredible depth and radiance, as if its glow and shine came from deep within it. Equally lovely and varied would have been its reflection and refraction of light, from its lamps at eventide and from the natural light of day. Indeed, such would have been the intent of its makers.

It may be that this majestic work, as significant as it is beautiful, will someday be found intact.
SUMMARY

The Tabernacle of Exodus is the earliest religious edifice known to have arisen completely from freely donated materials and labor. Its making entailed no levies of men or slaves. It was made by a generation of artisans and herdsmen emerging from generations of persecution, untutored in both the joys of liberty and the blessings of the Law and condemned to die in the wilderness of their wanderings.

Nonetheless, they achieved in this work their single legacy to their progeny who would enter Canaan and history. Only in this singular act of religious artistry were they the equal of Moses and Aaron in faithful obedience to Israel’s G-d. In all else they fell short, and were ordinary men and women. It is a touching scene to contemplate this great and pure work borne lovingly back to their homeland by a more fortunate generation raised in freedom and in the teachings of their G-d.

APPENDIX A
Some Aesthetic – Symbolic Questions Raised by Arched Branch versus Diagonal Branch Conceptions

The Rashi/Maimonides diagonal stem conception of the lamp raises questions. Aesthetically it is an awkward construct for the vertical lamps which must be upright and even in height, whereas the arched or bow construction comes naturally to the vertical position.

The arched branches though underneath the straight line of lamps can also be seen as symbolic of the heavens above the earth. The direction of a geometric visual symbol, unlike word placement in written language, does not alter its meaning. From an aesthetic viewpoint, the arched conception also has a more handsome countenance, a look of stability, authority and majesty that the top-heavy aspect of the diagonal stems lack.

But more important may be the symbolic questions. The diagonal branches introduce the only triangle shape in the entire tabernacle structure and it is not seen again in any Jewish ritual object. The triangle was however, sacred to the Egyptians as to many pagan cultures as a fertility symbol representing the female pubic triangle. We see the triangle form in the pyramids of Egypt and Sumner. The triangle may also be symbolic of the angle of sunbeams which the pyramids in their geometry simulate to a remarkable degree. Would such a symbol of anthropomorphic fertility and sun worship, so familiar and ingrained in the mindset of the Israelite slaves be used unaltered in the sacred lamp, an object of such distinction and importance to the holiest of the priestly rituals? For a fundamental geometric shape occurring nowhere else in Israelite liturgy but used extensively in pagan worship to be so prominent in the Tabernacle ritual of Israel when in every other instance aesthetic choice was modified so as to render forms less amenable to idolatrous veneration does raise some serious questions.

APPENDIX B
According to Morihiro Ogawa, a Japanese expert on swords:

Mr. Ogawa, a research associate in the Department of Arms and Armor at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and a fellow for research in Japanese arms and armor at the Museum of Fine
Arts in Boston, said in an interview that when a sword is forged, “what is big becomes small and beautiful.”

Starting with a hefty block of iron, as much as four inches square and two inches thick, a swordsmith added ash, clay, and water, and forged the blade over a charcoal fire to burn off the slag and any excess carbon. The resulting blade was about one-eighth the weight of the ingot with which the swordsmith began.

Master swordsmith, Mr. Ogawa explained, made blades that combined two strengths of metal, using the softer material inside (for flexibility), the harder outside (to hold a sharper edge), to make the metal nearly unbreakable.

The Seven-Branched Lamp:
The Menorah of Ancient Israel and Its Covenantal Significance
Reference Material

Exodus 25:31-40 gives the most detailed description of the lamp.

Exodus 25:39 “Of a talent (approx. 100 lbs) of pure gold shall it be made with all these vessels. (40) An see that thou make them after the pattern, which I am being shown thee in the Mount.”

“Moses could not visualize Menorah. Needed another image from G-d.”

Exodus 33:17. What to do with Menorah? Describes Moses second ascent of Sinai to bring down the new tablets to replace the first set broken because of the incident of the golden calf. Also proclaims the loving and forgiving nature of Israel’s G-d.

“In Kabbalah, the Menorah symbolized the tree of life and its seven branches were held to represent the planets, the firmaments, and the days of creation.”

NOTES

2. Exodus 25:40.
3. Mishcan and the Holy Garments by Rabbi Shalom Dove Steinberg, Torah Chaim Inst. 5752,
9. Ibid Mishcan and Holy Garments, Rabbi Dov Steinberg, pg. 37, 38, 44.
17. Ecology in the Bible, by Nogah Haveuveni, Neot Kedumin Ltd. P.O. Box 299 Kiryat, ONO Israel, 1974.
20. Genesis 22:31-19
25. Exodus 19:18
26. Genesis 41:43
27. Some Rabbinical sources state the branches were “round.” Ibid “Mishcan and Holy Garments,” Rabbi Don Steinberg, p. 40.
28. According to Rabbinical tradition, the hooves would form a tripod, in my opinion, so as to appear less as a familiar, animate form.
30. Pentateuch and Haftorah, Hertz Vol. 1, page 329-330 and commentary, also see XXVII (Ch 27:20f.)
In a contemporary context, any use of the word “spiritual” immediately calls for an explanation. As Roger Lipsey details, the term elicits a prior era in which “people were more sure of themselves and the order of things divine and human” (6). After Kandinsky, however, the *Geistige* and its English equivalent have become entrenched in the theory of art, and therefore of culture. In the absence of a clearly defined goal, the spiritual’s quality of “looking beyond,” of being a kind of pilgrimage whose purpose is discovery, of apprehending partially but increasingly a unity beyond the specifics of time and circumstance, constitutes its central purpose (7-11). It is the very indeterminacy of the goal that differentiates the spiritual attitude from doctrine or method.

Two of the adverse effects of the acritical attachment to technological practices have been the commitment to a mythicized doctrine of material progress, which privileges that which can be measured quantitatively, and the tendency to view matter as a finite tool, which should be regarded through the reductionist lens of efficiency. The resultant epistemology relegates the transcendent to an elective category which is thought to be purely subjective, unmeasurable, and therefore inessential.

The possibility that human perception of material phenomena is partial at any given moment has been recognized by a number of artists and writers. Among them are William Blake, whose *Jerusalem* presents an imaginative topography of human desire; Edwin Abbott Abbott, whose geometric allegory *Flatland* indicates how the limitations on the self imposed by the partiality of perception might be transcended; and Tony Robbin, whose paintings and sculptures have the heuristic intent of assisting in the expansion of the capacity to perceive. These artists provide an alternative to the desire to limit and control, suggesting an attitude in which the transcendent is regarded not as the antithesis of the material but as a further dimension of a potentially infinite continuum initiated by human vision.

Blake’s *Jerusalem* surrounds a dizzying rhetorical surface with a clear visual frame. W. J. T. Mitchell describes the poem as a “complex, labyrinthine structure which intentionally subverts our expectations of temporal order and of narrative or dramatic development,” but which is displayed in a round one hundred plates organized in a symmetrical set of four chapters each prefaced by a full-page illustration, and addressed to a specific audience; each section is framed by half-page designs at the top of the first page and at the bottom of the last (171). The four-fold formal arrangement is clearly part of the design. However, the referent of the four is anything but clear: speculations range from the Blake’s own four Zoas, the seasons, the times of day, phases of history or of human life, the four Evangelists or the four gospels, and the four gates of Golgonooza in the poem (Mitchell 171-172). This last speculation merits a closer look.

*Jerusalem* details the journey of Los, who is simultaneously hero, author, and reader as pilgrim, through the complex “passage through/Eternal Death” in freeing Albion from the state of material entrapment (Mitchell 198). The frontispiece to the poem shows him about to enter the “Door of Death for Albions sake” (*J* 1:9). The subsequent title page depicts “the cosmos he will
explore, the ‘Void outside of Existence’ which lies on the other side of Death’s Door, ‘A pleasant Shadow of Repose called Albions lovely Land’ (J 1:3; Mitchell 198-199). At the conclusion of the poem Los, as Creative Imagination, poetry, and the center of each Individual will emerge triumphant (Damon 246). In the final plate of the work, Los stands triumphant, holding hammer in right hand and tongs in left, while his Spectre carries the solar globe seen in the previous plate on its diurnal round. Enitharmon, doing the work of Generation, holds the distaff in her left hand, while from her right the fibers of life flow in a blood red shower down on the crescent moon and on to the green earth below (Paley 297). In the background the trilithons are arranged in a perfect circle, reversing Blake’s usual disapproval of ancient British architecture, the “Druid” temple transformed into “the structure of the millennial Jerusalem on earth” (Paley 297).

It is the form of the earthly Jerusalem which is of significance here. In his tripartite rendition of Los, Blake may well have signaled his own transformation through resignifying the lithic monuments, previously used as a symbol of the evil of the Druidic human sacrifice, and emblematic of the abuses of Natural religion (J 66: 2,8; 66: 20; 94: 25; Damon 387). But this reinstatement of the ancient monuments may also be connected with a set of associations focused on the city of Golgonooza, the city of “Art & Manufacture” (M 24: 50) which anticipates the New Jerusalem, and which is an essential component of Los’s progress toward reemergence. As S. Foster Damon’s diagram shows, Golgonooza is a four-dimensional city. Each of its four gates is oriented toward a cardinal point of the compass; each gate in turn “opens into each of the other gates but does so ‘each within other toward the Four points’” (J 12: 48; Damon 162-165). Impossible to depict and baffling in description, this ecphrastic of four-dimensional architecture complements the transformation of symbol played out in the depictions and descriptions of the megaliths with a visually inconceivable concretization of the power of the poetic word and form. The desire to transform matter into the transcendent is fully realized in the four-dimensional geometry of Golgonooza.

At a very different level of interest and narrative difficulty is Edwin Abbott Abbott’s Flatland. Abbott’s allegory of dimensional travel operates on several levels. It is a satire of the Victorian social caste system, peopled by beings whose geometric shapes dictate their social status; women are dangerous because, having a linear shape, in the two dimensional plane of Flatland they can approach with their sharp sides forward and, being nearly invisible, injure any male, even the stalwart A Square, whose appearance as a line in the flat plane of Flatland will never approach the length of the nearly-circular High Priest. At another level Flatland is a scientific primer aimed at inculcating a sense of the difficulties and the challenges involved in apprehending the fourth dimension as a mathematical reality through its requirement that the reader adjust three-dimensional perception to two dimensions. And finally, it serves as an allegory for the experience of the spiritual as a higher dimension of creativity (Rucker 11-12; Gilbert 402-403).

The narrator, the comfortably bourgeois A Square, relates two dream visions of lower dimensions, one in which he sees the king of Lineland, and another in which he sees Pointland. The occupants of these lower dimensions lack the ability to understand their differences from beings of a higher dimension. The sole occupant of Pointland, a logically solipsistic Monarch, mistakes the critical voices of A Square and his dream guide Sphere for his own thoughts, happily proclaiming “Ah . . . the joy of Thought! What can it not achieve by
thinking? Its own Thought coming to Itself, suggestive of Its disparagement, thereby to enhance Its happiness! . . . Ah, the divine creative power of the All in One!” (Abbott 95).

In Lineland the response is similar. In Square’s dream of the land of two dimensions, the King of Lineland refuses to accept Square’s contention that his kingdom, the Straight Line, was not the whole of Space (55). In response to the Square’s careful argumentation, concluding with his demonstration of the multiplicity of lines by simply moving perpendicularly out of the King’s line, the Monarch simply declares “you merely exercise some magic art of vanishing and returning,” and moves to attack Square, who wakes from his dream (64).

Thus Abbott playfully stages the difficulty of comprehending higher dimensions. It is a difficulty Square himself manifests. The decisive moment of the allegory occurs when Sphere, a creature from Spaceland, suddenly appears in Flatland. He demonstrates his spherical nature to Square by slowly raising and lowering himself through the plane of Flatland to create a linear progression Square has never before seen. Despite the precedent of the need for tolerance and open-mindedness established by his vision of Lineland, Square is unable to assimilate Sphere’s arguments, and resorts to force in attacking Sphere with one of his corners. In exasperation Sphere simply lifts Square into Spaceland, where the sight of multiple phenomena of the third dimension transform Square into a visionary. Having comprehended the third dimension, Square extrapolates further dimensions, moving through the line with two terminal points in One Dimension, the square with four terminal points in two dimensions, the cube with eight terminal points in three dimensions, to the possibility of the hypercube of the fourth dimension with sixteen terminal points (90). At this Sphere balks. Though he admits that visitors from higher dimensions have been reported, he concludes that “most people say these visions arose from the thought—you will not understand me—from the brain; from the perturbed angularity of the Seer” (91). When Square persists in his speculations about higher dimensions, Sphere drops his initiate down into Flatland and vanishes. The allegory ends with Square confined to prison, his attempts to convince his fellow Flatlanders of the reality of the third dimension failed and forbidden.

Surprisingly broad despite its playful surface, Abbott’s allegory includes a concept of demonstration that pertains to the concept of the spiritual. Despite his status as a being of a higher perspective, Sphere is unable to make the intuitive leap attained by Square. It is of significance that Square’s two dreams, the first of Lineland occurring before Square’s encounter with Sphere and the second occurring after Square’s rift with Sphere, bracket his actual experience of higher dimensions. What Abbott seems to be at pains to show is that whatever the higher dimensions may signify allegorically, the combination of actual experience of lower dimensions combined with conceptual knowledge of the higher dimensions is insufficient to comprehend fully those higher dimensions. Neither the self-satisfied Point, the overbearing King of Lineland, nor the basically altruistic Sphere are able to secure the comprehension of higher dimensions that Square attains. This seems to be in large part a consequence that Sphere lifted him up physically into Spaceland, forcing him to see what he could not comprehend verbally. Whatever this suggests metaphysically, and Abbott seems more concerned to suggest than to delineate the emphasis in on the need for vision, not in a mystical but in a very physical form.

Abbott’s emphasis on the need actually to see rather than to only hypothesize or mathematically model higher dimensions is also found in the work of artists such as Gordon
Onslow-Ford. His *Without Bounds* of 1939, a coulage of Ripolin enamel on which a reversing perspective scheme is inscribed, suggests that the “infinity and boundlessness” of the poured field can only be loosely indicated by the limiting frame of perspective vision (Henderson, “Mysticism,” 229). The artist placed beneath his *Man on a Green Island* of the same year the statement that “We can say that matter is only the misshaped shadow of reality,” a clear indication of his programmatic commitment to the desire to depict the fourth dimension (Henderson, “Mysticism, 229). Linda Henderson concludes that Onslow-Ford maintained a “monistic vision of the infinite worlds of higher consciousness” without making the “reductivist denial of nature” found in Suprematism and other movements concerned with geometry (233).

Beginning in the 1970s, a new generation of artists and mathematicians resumed interest in depicting the fourth dimension, especially as aided by computer generated imagery. Tom Banchoff, a mathematician at Brown University, produced the computer model of a four-dimensional rotating hypercube in 1979. Inspired by mathematical theory and assisted by this computer technology, Tony Robbin is renewing the effort to create art, which will allow its viewers to actually apprehend the fourth dimension. In paintings such *Simplex #9* of 1983, an acrylic on canvas measuring five feet by seven feet, Robbin creates a large-scale field which depicts the fourth dimension. In it “impossible figures such as splayed-out Necker cubes, linear grids denoting independent planes in space overlap and interpenetrate.” His paintings present a set of contradictory visual clues that cannot be reduced to a three-dimensional logic (Henderson, *Fourth*, 351). Moving up a dimension, sculptures such as *Untitled #3* of 1987, made of welded steel, plastic, and colored light and measuring 70” x 70” x 15,” advance the argument much as Abbott moves his readers from Lineland to Flatland. And finally, the hypercube is presented as an architectural model in *Quasicrystal Dome* of 1990, whose 6 foot diameter encompasses aluminum, stainless steel, and plastic. An inhabitable version of the model would promote the direct realization of the fourth dimension, which Robbin himself claims to have apprehended directly for perhaps 15 minutes.

Robbin describes himself as being motivated not by a “desire to illustrate new physical theories, nor by a desire to solve mathematical problems...[but by] a desire to complete our subjective experience by inventing new aesthetic and conceptual capabilities” (Henderson, *Fourth*, 351).

Exploration of the fourth dimension is a means of approaching the spiritual which does not require those who accept the root metaphors of technology to change their essential foundational myth of progress. As such, it presents an argument against control in the very language used to acquire control. Tony Robbin feels that the accepted verism that “science precedes art” should be reversed; that it is “progress in art that leads to realization in science and not the other way around” (Robbin 123).

Treating the fourth dimension as a literal dimension and offering methods for expanding the very ability to perceive more fully what has been taken for finite has several advantages. The mechanistic idealism of seventeenth century rationalism in applying the “method of detail,” an approach still dominant today, may well be the root of contemporary environmental difficulties (Pacey 100-102). To regard nature as having a measurable, knowable, and explorable fourth dimension as yet to be apprehended will give even the staunchest positivist reason to pause. The complacency of panoptic power, perhaps best symbolized by the Global Positioning Satellite, will necessarily be altered.
At a more fundamental level, the very idea of control through the interweaving of science and technology will be challenged by their very methods. Even the most reluctant reductionist must recognize the possibility that dimensions beyond the currently known are not limited to playful fantasy or world-denying metaphysic, but that the larger world of the spiritual is at least partially contiguous with what is called physical reality, which is the gateway, not the focal point.
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WAITING AND WATCHING: CONTEMPORARY VISUAL ARTISTS AND THEIR VISIONS

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INTRODUCTION

In Kyoto, Japan, Canadian artist Robin Campbell gently marks the earth in a series of site-specific ceramic installations she calls, “Prayers for the well-being of mountains and their forests.” In India, Irish artist Marie Foley confects small, meditative sculptures of porcelain and bog oak. They are memories of prayers she offered during pilgrimages in county Donegal. In San Francisco, American artist Lucy Arai stitches, hour after hour, as much as 12 hours at a time, in her studio. She is practicing, the artist says, a “. . . highly religious meditation in which nature reveals itself to me.”

All three artists are intent upon creating a contemporary, earth-centered, vision-driven, sacred art. Like other sacred arts, the artists’ work has a message: they seek to redirect our attention to the physical environment around us because it is there the artists have found themselves standing in sacred places. The person who can see what you see stands there too.

In their work, the artists use a variety of techniques, including prayer and meditation, to facilitate and control trance state. “Controlled trance state” is another way of speaking of the liminal period—the “door-opening” or “threshold” period—which precedes artistic inspiration. It is a time of “waiting and watching.” Campbell mixes clay, Foley files bogwood, Arai stitches. Other artists, too, independent of any faith practice, have discovered similar patterns of repetitive behaviour and they use them in their work.

In this paper, I will interweave statements from those interviews with the experiences of Robin Campbell, Marie Foley, Lucy Arai.

LUCY ARAI

Lucy Arai believes her work has evolved from the practice of sashiko. Sashiko is a straight-stitch Japanese embroidery technique traditionally taught by mothers to their daughters. It is also used as a Zen meditation discipline. Arai, however, learned sashiko from her uncle when she was a girl of 14 sent to Japan for a year. She spoke no Japanese. The aunt and uncle spoke no English. Sashiko resulted. It has been part of Arai’s art practice almost 25 years.

In this mixed media work done in 1996, the artist combines the technique of sashiko, stitching paper with white cotton thread, with sumi-e, the Japanese technique of ink painting. It is a large work, nearly 2 m in length; the cloth backing is 3 m.

This triptych, also done in 1996, uses the same combination of techniques—sashiko and sumi-e. It is 3 m x 3 m. The last two years, Arai has been based temporarily in Washington. Her scale has become smaller. This work, completed in 2001, is 20” in height and 40” in width.
Arai’s visual motif is usually a circle. It is the contradictions, the process of circling and centering, which matter to her. Arai says, “If I paint nothing more than circles, I have work to do for the rest of my life.”

MARIE FOLEY

Petrified bog wood is one of Marie Foley’s favourite materials. The artist spends hours filing it by hand. It is used here with porcelain in “Rite of Passage.” “Bog wood forces me to go in a way it wants to go,” says Foley. “When you build by hand, you have time to think about how the piece is growing.” Most of her sculpture is small, tabletop sized, and it can be taken apart and looked at closely.

“The Great Breath,” made of porcelain, yew, and sycamore, is one of a series connected with pilgrimage. The sculpture is built on a system of fours and threes, negative and positive spaces. Its toothed comb parts the air which flows over it just as our mouths form vocatives, shaping the air, when we speak.

In “Instrument of Primordial Sound,” an older sculpture, we see the same mystery explored from another possibility, one more Pythagorean perhaps.

“Gateless Gate,” another of the pilgrimage series, is also built in threes and fours. The negative and positive spaces are fluid. The artist’s notes for this sculpture state “Gateless Gate” is a meditation on the “Stations of the Cross” (the Catholic ritual symbolically retracing Jesus’s death walk to Calvary).

The artist acknowledges the importance in her life of Irish Catholicism—emphasis Irish. Foley has three times made the arduous pilgrimage to Lough Derg in county Donegal. There have been times when Marie Foley attended Mass daily. But, of priests . . . ? The artist says simply, “I have to make my way around them.”

ROBIN CAMPBELL

It is Canadian artist Robin Campbell’s experience that sacred meanings, even fugitive ones, lie within the cognitive mapping schemes of sacred sites. These meanings can be retrieved through a close analysis of the site’s visual and spatial configurations—its cognitive map—even if the site has been forgotten or despoiled. Campbell makes offerings to mountains—to sacred mountains despoiled through clear-cutting and ignorance.

In “Large Borrowed Landscape Piece,” Campbell uses a traditional Japanese landscape technique—shakkei, the “borrowed landscape”—to draw the viewer’s attention to Mt. Hiei, the mountain on the horizon. Its form is replicated in the ceramic sculptures.

The artist’s involvement with the mountain did not stop at this remove. Robin Campbell regularly leaves offerings, prayers for healing, on the mountain itself—raw clay, for example, held in place with twigs. The artist leaves nothing that is permanent and marks each gentle intervention carefully on the topographical maps in her studio. In response, she says the mountain teaches her more, and the artist believes she is in the presence of chthonic powers—ancient kami.

This year she and Nina Handjeva-Wellor designed and built an “Earth Shrine.” People were invited to make prayer offerings at the shrine. Many did, writing their own prayers for the earth. The shrine
became a collage of prayer from many cultures. It was installed during the summer at a Buddhist
monastery in Kyoto at the invitation of the monastery’s abbot.

Robin Campbell continues her quiet work on these mountains. After travelling back and forth for years
between Kanagawa province, Japan, where she is a recognized artist, and Montréal, where she was a
postal employee, Campbell has made the hard decision to live permanently in Japan. More and and
more Japanese artists are working with her now. She teaches them shakkei, and she teaches them to
see the area’s ancient sacred sites anew.\textsuperscript{15}

ARTISTIC VISION

Lucy Arai is a practicing Buddhist and follower of the \textit{kami}; Robin Campbell is also a follower of the
\textit{kami}; and then there is Irish Catholic Marie Foley. What connects them is not a declared faith position;
it is something else—their artistic visions.

Artistic vision is much more than a good idea that propels the artist into the studio. A nature-centered
artistic vision is revelatory. Some connection is being made by the observer—the artist—with a hidden
reality, whether the vision be as simple as light glinting off a leaf, or the glance of a bird, the flicker of
fish. It is, more accurately perhaps, a religio-aesthetic vision.\textsuperscript{16}

The fact the artist \textit{observes something} via vision \textit{obligates} the artist to record \textit{via art} in order to show to
others what has been shown to the artist. The observation enters into the artist's field of vision
highlighted, or haloed, by whatever further symbolic meaning the artist imparts to it—“spiritual,”
“sacred,” “religious,” and so forth.

Usually the visionary experiences related by the artists are—what American artist Jody Pinto calls “\ldots a
way of seeing and then letting that experience come to the surface.”\textsuperscript{17} These experiences are familiar,
everyday ones for the artists interviewed. American artist Meryl Taradash says cheerfully of her capacity
for momentary vision, “I live my life in an ecstatic state.”\textsuperscript{18} Isleta Pueblo artist Lorenzo Baca cautions:

\begin{quote}
    it’s important not to separate visionary experiences, or ecstatic experiences, or any of those
    experiences from your life. The attitude of saying “ok” is what opens you up to that creative
    process, to what some people call spiritual. \ldots I cannot separate my spiritual life from my
    economic life.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

That was true for others, too. Canadian Métis artist Martin Dunn told a complex story of how he came
to find himself scrabbling a hole in the earth with his bare hands in order to bury his head in the
dirt—which he did. Buried his head and, symbolically, buried his thinking self. Lifting his head up, he
saw a hummingbird. From that moment on, Dunn maintains: “\ldots I was exposed to satisfactions beyond
my wildest expectations \ldots I think that is why artists are artists...they have made a connection that is
right. They are unfolding in ‘the right way.’”\textsuperscript{20}

Tchippewyan artist Alex Janvier underwent the same confirmation of direction \textit{via} vision when he was
a student in art school. He had become afraid.\textsuperscript{21} At the point of changing his program to commercial
art, some “force or guiding spirit”\textsuperscript{22} entered him \textit{and} entered his work: “One or two of my teachers saw
that in my work. They didn’t give a damn about my future welfare. They just wanted me to keep
painting.”\textsuperscript{23} So he did.
When artists try to explain the effect of visionary obligation on their work as artists, they speak of the experience as one of becoming a medium. Jennifer Dickson, one of Canada’s most renowned artists—says quietly:

> As my work gains in power, it is not my work. I ‘receive’ it. I pray every day in the studio before I start working because I do not know if I am going to be able to do it, to do my work well enough.  

But isn’t the artist supposed to be working out some life trauma there in the studio? Isn’t that what we have been told about artists?

When I ask artists what is the relationship of vision to life crises in terms of influence upon the work? Almost all agree: vision is the most important—although vision and life crisis are inevitably intertwined.

American artist Tal Streeter spoke of survival and vision in frank terms:

> Survival. And grace. . . . You do that when life is threatened. That, in turn, gives me an enhanced desire to see more clearly what can be seen, and that in its way is vital to my desire to survive, to stay alive, to be an artist so that I may show more clearly the bit of order there is the grand scale of chaos, and the wonder of it all. I love and cherish that wonder above all else.”


WORK ROUTINES

The work habits of artists facilitate the waiting and watching period. Artists do not work just anywhere. They go to their studios and they clean before they start work. Cleaning the studio is one of the most common of the preparatory routines. Meryl Taradash describes cleaning as a “meditation . . . I feel as though I am cleaning my body, emptying myself of impurities.” “Everything has to be clean,” said Alex Janvier, “. . . and no sex. Sex and art don’t mix very well. You can’t bullshit art.” Other artists agree.

Nuisance chores get done, too. Dry cleaning is dropped off, or picked up. Photocopying and filing done. Clearing away things, for example—whether it be pending chores or bills to be paid—is important because these tasks are solitary activities which serve to build the waiting tension.

Yurok artist Rick Bartow calls the waiting period, “standing around.” He says it is important because “. . . there has to be a certain energy, or tension, and the work either goes or it doesn’t.” French Canadian artist Carla Whiteside says the same thing: “I tell people I am thinking, otherwise they might think I was putting off doing my work.” Apache artist Anita Endrezze says, “Much of that thinking is just letting tension build.” Canadian artist Andy Fabo says he just sits down to read old newspapers as he waits for the working rhythm he calls “dreamtime,” the time of visions.

Reading all the old newspapers is not the point; nor is doing all the filing and photocopying. The artists are on the alert—they are watching for the pattern, the metaphor, the connections to be made. Then the work can start.
DEADLINES

Deadlines are important. Deadlines push tension. Peter Hutchinson says, “I need deadlines. I beg people to give me one. I need deadlines to set up a tension.” Jody Pinto calls it a necessary “preliminary anxiety . . . probably similar to an actor’s stage fright.”

When the studio has been cleaned, and all the other detritus of daily life cleared away, the artist enters what sounds like—from the descriptions offered by those interviewed—a light working trance state. The trance may be deeper than that. I am not competent to judge.

Ann McCoy said with surety she knew she was in trance:

I work in total silence, no music. It’s an incubation experience in a way. I close everything off. I go into my shell like an animal. I have all the windows blocked off in my studio. And when I am working, I shut the telephone off.

When artists are working intensely, they commonly lose track of time. Sleep patterns are disrupted. When they sleep, dreams proliferate. Sometimes dreams direct the work, resolving specific problems in the art for the artist.

Getting into it is the hard part. Doing the work? Not hard at all. Says Jody Pinto: “When I am finally into the work, well, I just sing.”

The rewards are great. A life in balance with nature. Donna Henes puts it this way: “It’s just me and nature,” says. “I am not giving out more than I am getting.” Marie Foley expresses a similar thought when she says, “I always feel my work is a prayer; it has to be given back.”

CONCLUSION

The “waiting and watching” period is formalised with repetitive, patterned activities to build tension—the “waiting.” The artist “watches” for vision, a vision of connection. When it occurs, as Marie Foley says: “Art is not different from nature. The circumference is all of creation. The more you look at creation, you know more. . . . Everything is visually connected, isn’t it? When I make something, I seem to pull out the connections so they can be seen by others. It just seems extraordinary, and I’m not extraordinary.”

NOTES
3. Ibid
4. Ibid

9. The “Stations of the Cross,” also known as the “Way of the Cross,” is a series of images of specific events which are traditionally believed to have occurred during Jesus’s death walk to Calvary, a hill outside Jerusalem. They are customarily set at 14 points, or stations, arranged around the interior walls of the nave of a Catholic or Anglican church. The sequence can be placed anywhere and outdoor settings are popular in some areas. Johnathan Z. Smith discusses the ritual context in To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 79-95. For a discussion of several contemporary interpretations by artists of the sequence, see Susan B. Schantz, The Stations of the Cross: A Calculated Trap? (London, Ontario: Centre for Social and Humanistic Studies, University of Western Ontario, 1991).

10. Foley, letter to author, August 7, 1998: “It is one of the toughest pilgrimages surviving. Lough Derg was the only place marked on early maps of the world which included Ireland! It goes back to the time of St. Patrick 432 AD . . . + is called St. Patrick’s Purgatory. ‘After each pilgrimage I’ve felt so uplifted + pure!’”


12. In an earlier site analysis, for example, Robin Campbell argued persuasively that the site of the McTavish Waterworks in Montréal, Québec, succeeds in “projecting a coherent cosmos on an ‘unmappable’ contemporary world” (p.iii); hence, it is an “accidental sacred site.” See Heather Robin Campbell, “The Montreal McTavish Waterworks: an Accidental Sacred Site,” (M.A. Thesis, Art History, Concordia University, Canada, 1997). Privately, Campbell believes the waterworks site must have been once a known indigenous sacred site (personal communication with author, Ottawa, July 1995); but, there is, at present, no way to provide evidence for this thesis.

13. Robin Campbell, e-mail to author, September 3, 1998: “In the past, Mt. Hiei was clear-cut”. . . [and] “despite the regrowth of the forest, continues to suffer erosion.”

14. Campbell, Ibid., “Over the past year, I have sawn down more pine trees as they died off—either the result of natural recession or of pollution, depending on whom one talks to. In the heat of this summer, I restored the log-and-stake stairs of the incredibly steep path that winds from the main campus up to the site. I swept away the loose leaves and pebbles. I was worried that a member of the teams of students who helped to carry the pieces up to the ridge might slip and fall.”

15. Campbell, e-mail to author, October 20, 21; November 1, 1998.


22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.


31. Carla Whiteside, interview with author, Ottawa, Canada, 
40. *Ibid*
ART, EGOMANIA AND BEYOND

Cliff McReynolds
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Let me begin with a question.

How many of you would agree with Lily Tomlin, that reality is a collective hunch?

I do, but it also seems to me much more; I think that reality is a little like perfection: the closer you come to it, the further away it gets. I also think reality is normal, inevitable, and sometimes a consensus of shared experience.

For example: How many of you have ever walked into a gallery or museum and been utterly baffled by the art you saw? Then after looking around for a while, you walk out and get this feeling like: Is my leg being pulled? Well, I've had that experience, too, and I am one of the artists who spent years creating exactly that kind of art.

So what's going on?

I think mostly an unhappy marriage between egoism and marketing, locked into a system so rigid it makes fascism look happy-go-lucky.

If you want to be an avant-garde artist these days—and that's what I'll be focusing on, the avant-garde—you can do whatever you like as long as it's what the system wants. Sort of like what Henry Ford once said about his cars: you can have any color you want as long as it's black.

Now, what the system wants are artists who can outrage or at least titillate the public.

When I was a young man, roughly at the beginning of the last ice age, my peers and I would have died a thousand deaths before compromising our integrity. Now I'm told, artists here in New York who refuse to alter their work to sell, or fit into a trend or start one, are held in contempt.

The result is a growing army of terminally ambitious artists marching lockstep toward a common goal of doing something freaky or esoteric enough to somehow separate themselves from the thousands of others all struggling to the same thing, all the while adjusting their consciences according to the demands of commerce.

In response, big time collectors rarely buy art anymore, they invest in it. Since most of them question their own taste, they rely on dealers among others to dispense that reassuring explication measured in tonnage which by implication contains keys to decoding, if not the art, at least the marketplace. If you don’t understand what you’ve seen, for example, it must be important, or if it rings false it must be true, or if it’s really bad it must be good, or two leaps per chasm is fatal.
Any more questions? Anyone bothered by all those artists compromising their God-given integrity to get our attention any way they can? How about canning your feces and selling that as art like some guy did? How about shooting yourself? How about something really bloody like slicing your own penis off inch by inch as Schwartzkogler did? And of course there’s that old standby sex. Sex with a tree. Sex with a donkey. Graphic, pornographic, dirty, filthy, sex. That gets our attention, doesn’t it? Of course it does, but I gotta tell you, personally, I think sex is nobody’s business except for the three people involved.

Seriously, I do think this is a sure way for an artist to get exceedingly confused about the difference between success and fulfillment. Originality may lead to success, for example, but it is not a valid goal. It’s a normal byproduct of an artist’s progress toward his or her potential.

Effective communication, on the other hand, is a valid goal, and artists need to communicate like salmon need to spawn. It may be our most basic impulse. Behind the artist’s games, flamboyance, weirdness, heroic despair and all the rest, is a blazing compulsion to get the message out.

So why is the message so often garbled, silly, vacuous or meaningless?

I think the big reason is that avant-garde artists tend to be such egotists. Let me define that; an egotist is someone who is more interested in himself than in me. That is, someone obsessively self-centered.

For example. Suppose a boy has an alcoholic father, who stumbles home drunk, night after night, urinates in the kitchen sink, vomits on the floor, smashes beer bottles against the wall and slaps his wife and kids around.

So the boy grows up, becomes an artist, has a big exhibit.

We walk in and what do we see? Broken beer bottles strewn around the floor, yucked-up walls, a foul smell, and beneath the floor a father doll with pins stuck in it.

So what’s going on? We have some vague idea, but it’s not very clear.

But for the artist it’s all perfectly obvious, and he’s wondering why we don’t understand.

Still he mushes on, undeterred, absolutely convinced of the importance of his work for one basic reason: because it’s so important to him.

Vito Acconci the sculptor is typical. About his art he says: “It’s all about me, by me, it’s all through me.”

Self-centered artists make self-centered art. And because they assume that they are themselves the source of their creativity, they proceed as if there were no divine or sacred dimension to art. In this way they do accurately reflect the culture. In movies, novels, on TV, people get cancer, their children are murdered, women get battered, raped or both, and yet everyone always deals with everything on their own, as if there were no God.
Maybe this is another reason avant-garde art seems so out of touch. I think most of us do feel that there is an inherent spiritual dimension to life. And I also think we yearn to see our hazy but deeply felt insights and visions reflected and expanded in art, as artists have always done in virtually every era and culture except our own.

What happened? How did art get so twisted, and artists so obsessively self-centered? Unfortunately I don’t have time for a historical review here—unfortunate for me, fortunate for you—but I can at least give you a hint by quoting Picasso, who is probably the most influential artist of the 20th century. Now Picasso was obviously given great gifts. But imagine what he might have created if he’s chosen to be guided by his creator. Instead, he said: “I want to take nature apart and put it back together according to my own will.” And he did. He also said: “Of course nature exists so we can rape her.” And finally, summing up, he said: “I am God.”

In my view this approach to creativity does not serve people who care about art, nor in the end, artists themselves.

Now let me be clear. My only quarrel with Picasso is his I am God egoism. Same with the avant-garde, both for the same reason; egoism perverts the creative process. For instance, originality for originality’s sake is like chemotherapy for chemotherapy’s sake.

Avant-garde artists today act as if there were no such thing as enduring aesthetic and spiritual principles by which to judge merit and quality in art. Instead, they make up their own rules and call this freedom. But isn’t freedom from all restraint after all license? And doesn’t license also impose limitations? As Dylan put it: “Are birds free from the chains of the skyway?” Let me make an analogy here.

Suppose we all make up our own traffic laws. You say: “I always drive 120 miles an hour on the freeway.” You say: “So do I and I always go the wrong way.” You say: I drive wherever and however I want: Remember the guy who said, “If you don’t like the way I drive, stay off the sidewalk.” And everybody says, “I am not going to be bound by any restrictions. If I want to park all day in a busy intersection, I do. Nobody tells me what to do.”

And yet often, this attitude leads the artist nowhere.

Peter Haley, for instance, thinks that the elements of modernism have been “denuded of any last vestiges of life or meaning,” and another New York artist, Bruce Boice, says: Art doesn’t seem to matter. It all looks all right, but it just doesn’t matter. You get bored doing it because you’re in a vacuum. There’s no motivation, no rules to say what you should do, or whether it’s good or not. If there were rules it would be simple enough to know what to do, but you find yourself looking for something and you don’t know what it is, so how do you know when you find it?”

As a former cutting edge wannabe myself, my heart goes out to these artists and to any artist who gets detoured, chewed up and dead-ended by the avant-garde art system. I’ve been that done there and can verify first-hand that suicidal depression, for example, is not all it’s cracked up to be.

But now let’s turn from vacuous to intriguing.
Consider this. Out of the billions and billions of art objects people have made over thousands of years, perhaps 1/10 of 1% have wound up in museums as treasures.

Why?

Has this been a random selection?

Or are there, apart from your reality and mine, valid universal principles upon which to assess merit and quality in art? I’ve put this exact question to a number of art critics. Hilton Kramer’s response is typical: “No, but you shouldn’t be surprised, because there are no valid universal principles in any other discipline either.”

With all due respect, I disagree with Mr. Kramer, because certain evidence and my experience suggests otherwise.

I define art as the creative expression of truth. If this is a valid definition, then the greatest art is that which is most truthful. It seems to me that this helps explain why some art is treasured in museums, and most of it isn’t.

Simon Weil says, “To be always relevant, you have to say things which are eternal.” Great art is always relevant; it transcends its own time. This is what we mean when we say that art has “stood the test of time.” And, by the way, if Christ is right, this testing process is just one aspect of a larger reality awaiting all artists. As He put it, “Many who are first shall be last and many who are last shall be first.”

When former Met director Thomas Hoving was a young curator at the Cloisters, he would spend hours and hours down in the vaults feeling the art, smelling it, tasting it, anything to develop his awareness of what constitutes great art.

So what does? What are qualities of great art? Let me suggest a few.

One, quality itself. Great art is done with great skill and built to last. Mediocre art is executed less well; anywhere from slipshod to adequate to pretty good. It’s the difference between a painting by Anselm Kiefer done 15 years ago which is already falling to pieces, and a painting by Vermeer, still glowing with the same luminosity as the day it was finished 300 years ago.

Great art fulfills its purpose. The purpose of art is to tell the truth.

Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel over 400 years ago. Not only was it considered a consummate and prodigious demonstration of skill—as it still is—but it also told truths about the relationship of people to God which are as pertinent today as they were then.

The balance between unity and variety may be the most basic of all aesthetic principles. It is a principle derived from creation itself. There are for example, 200,000 different kinds of beetles. A beetle is one kind of insect, an insect is one form of life, life is one form of creation; it’s an amazing variety, and yet unified and ordered, in this instance by species, family class, phylum, and so forth.
Consider this: electrons circle around a nucleus of energy as planets do around the sun, one too small, the other too large to see with the naked eye, but both adhering to the same physical principles.

Art is meant to help put us in touch with this unseen order of things, as Blake put it, “to reveal the infinite which was hid.” The truth, in other words.

Webster defines truth as that which corresponds to reality. Mortimer Adler says that truth is consensus. Gandhi says truth is God, and Christ says, “I am the truth.” Take your pick. In any case, when art tells the truth it is speaking and reaffirming the truth already there, in our hearts. Van Gogh’s Starry Night, for example, reminds us of things we’ve always known. I think everyone here has gone out on a clear night, looked up and felt God in the mystical vastness of all that beauty spread out across the sky.

But what is art compared to stars? What is art compared to a flea? Duane Hansen made sculptures of figures so life-like you take for granted the guy sitting there is a person until you notice that he never moves. He has no soul, no life. But he reminds us that we do, and that, as Michelangelo put it, “The greatest work of art is but a pale shadow of the divine perfection.”

For any artists here, I want to offer you my empathy and one simple suggestion: If you want to create, get in touch with the creator. If you’re like most artists—you are intense, committed, driven. Good. You may also wake up some mornings like I do, feeling like it’s hardly worthwhile to chew through the leather straps. But that’s good too, because after you’ve tried applying reason to your problems, and logic, and experience and common sense, you might get desperate enough to try something practical, like prayer.

A final thought or two: no president, no surgeon, no artist, none of us can do great things; we can only do small things with great love. Nevertheless, I believe that anything we do in love—whether it’s forgiving an insult or making a painting to magnify God—is far better and more enduring than anything else we ever do. Even Picasso knew this: “In the end,” he said, “love is all that matters.”

So—what is love? Well, let’s just say that love is a feeling you can’t get rid of, like a fungus in your armpit.
MAKING THE SPIRITUAL VISIBLE

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This paper will have as its purpose to give examples of the various means that artists employ to reveal aspects of the spiritual in visual art, using examples of two dimensional and three dimensional art.

Artists have often used the equilateral or isosceles triangle shape to communicate an idea of timelessness and permanence so often used in communicating the spiritual: the ancient Egyptians in their pyramid shape, Piero della Francesca in his Resurrection and frequently Raphael in his Madonnas. Jeremiah (Slide One) and St. Cecilia (Slide Two) illustrate this usage. Often, when the above-mentioned triangles are employed, a vertical axis and symmetry accompany their use. Both of the latter are frequently employed in religious art, since the feeling of aspiration that verticality expresses (the Gothic cathedrals) is very consonant with spirituality. Symmetry is often used in religious art, where it reinforces the timelessness basic to expressions of the eternal. Symmetry is seen in the Ark of the Covenant (Slide Three) and the Incarnation (Slide Four), and it often accompanies the triangle shapes in religious art.

Diagonal and curved lines and irregular triangles are often used to communicate the dynamic, and are appropriate visualizations of concepts of the Divine, where God is looked upon as infinite energy. (Process theology, which sees the Infinite as continually changing, would be consonant with this type of image, an example of which would be the interlacing designs of the Book of Kells) Christ Rescuing St. Peter, (Slide Five) would be an example of the use of curves, diagonals, and irregular triangles which all contribute to an effect of the dynamic power of God. The Windhover Magazine Cover (Slide Six), an illustration for Gerard Manley Hopkins’ poem of the same name, also uses curves for dynamic purposes.

The Dispersal of the Apostles from the Mountaintop (Slide Seven) uses the curved lines of movement to define the dynamic world of the spirit, and these are contrasted with the more static ones that characterize the stationery earth below.

Distribution of mass can also be used in a spiritually meaningful way, as can be seen in the Altar from St. Regis Church, Birmingham, Michigan (Slide Eight), where lightness associated with Spirit is achieved by the main weight of the altar being thrust upward, whereas thrusting the weight downward adds to an impression of eternal immutability typical of Egyptian art, as is seen in this painting of the Façade of the Temple of Horus at Edfu (Slide Nine), where the downward thrust is accentuated by weightier colors being present at the base of the pylon gateway. Massive figures have an impression of weight that adds to their monumentality, as in the immense statues of the Buddha, and those of Rameses II at Abu Simbel. Christ on the Judgement Seat Before Pilate, (Slide Ten) exaggerates the mass of the figure in order to dramatize the weightiness of a pivotal moment in St. John’s account of the Passion. Scripture scholars claim that the Evangelist is purposefully ambivalent in his wording as to whether Pilate sat himself on the judgement seat, or whether Pilate sat Christ on the judgement seat. The latter would be a reference to Christ as the real Judge. On a smaller scale, the stocky figures in Sumerian art contribute to the effect of group power in the Stele of the Vultures and the Warka vase. The Portrait of James Brooks (Slide Eleven) also shows, in a figure that is
compact as well as massive, the fact that, since the subject fills the picture plane, the figure’s massiveness is emphasized. Verticality alone can communicate aspiration, as can be seen in the many religious images that use it, as present in the Gothic architecture mentioned above. The elongated figures on the west facade of Chartres Cathedral have a strong vertical directionality, which, combined with their attenuated slenderness, emphasize the spiritual. Absence of mass can communicate the spiritual, as can be seen in El Greco’s figures as well as those of Chartres Cathedral. The Pietá (Slide Twelve) employs divisionist vertical streaks of color to define its attenuated shapes. (The word Pietá is usually used to identify the lament over the dead Body of Christ, but here it is used to describe what Carryll Houselander calls “The Passion of the Infant Christ.” According to this spiritual writer, Christ’s Passion began long before His adult suffering and death, as indicated by the prophesy of Simeon in the temple.) The Assumption (Slide Thirteen) uses vertical lines to delineate upward movement, in keeping with the subject matter.

The Sanctuary of St. John Francis Regis Church (Slide Fourteen) in Birmingham, Michigan, is dominated by verticality, as are its furnishings, such as the walnut lectern (Slide Fifteen), the bronze candelabra (Slide Sixteen) and the bronze tabernacle and walnut stand (Slides Seventeen and Eighteen).

The joining of verticals with horizontals produces an effect of permanence and stability, as is shown in the architecture of ancient Egypt, as can be seen in the painted, creative interpretation of the Interior of the Temple of Isis at Philae (Slide Nineteen), and the Raising of the Daughter of Jairus (Slide Twenty). The majestic framing afforded by these examples is in direct contrast with the dynamism of the curved arcs seen in The Pool of Bethesda (Slide Twenty-One). St. John on the Island of Patmos (Slide Twenty-Two) uses a progression of arcs of different degrees in order to unify the painting around the central orb of the sun so that the dynamism is more self-contained in its focus. The symbolism of light, so crucial in religious and spiritual art, will be discussed later, but is mentioned here since it is an important aspect of the painting. It is very important in St. John’s Gospel, and the Evangelist wrote the Book of Revelation on the Greek island of Patmos. This progression of arcs can be seen as a grandiose organizational and expressive device in the similar “sunrise motif” present in Botticelli’s Birth of Venus, which some writers claim Botticelli based on the sculptured image of the Baptist of Christ from a Romanesque baptismal font. In this parallel structure, the painter, revealing a characteristically Italian Renaissance tendency, ties together the ancient Greek myth with the Biblical account, emphasizing their common denominator: the concept of ideal love and beauty born from water.

Falling lines communicate sadness, as can be seen in this sketch for a Deposition (Slide Twenty-Three) for a Byzantine church. The figures are stylized, as they always are in Byzantine art, and the relationship of stylization to the spiritual will be attended to below. (Since every example of stylization has as its purpose to reveal what cannot be seen, it is a crucially important aspect of art that reveals the spiritual.)

Conversely, rising lines can express joy, as seen in The Resurrection (Slide Twenty-Four) a pen and ink graphic work, and in the carbon drawing pencil design for a Christmas card (Slide Twenty-Five). This pattern can also be seen in Grünewald’s Resurrection panel from the Isenheim Altarpiece.
Horizontal lines communicate a feeling of rest and sleep, as in William Blake’s *Pity, Like a Newborn Babe*. Peace can also be communicated by this directionality, as can been seen in the pastel of the *Lincoln Memorial* (Slide Twenty-Six), and *The Journey to Emmaus* mural (Slide Twenty-Seven). Death can also be expressed in this way, as in the *Death of Procris* by Piero di Cosimo. It is usually the dominant direction in the work of Edward Hopper, where it is often joined with verticals to express stable monumentality.

Sometimes directional contrasts are used to suggest more than one spiritual world. In the West Pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, verticals joined with horizontals are used to represent the god Apollo, who establishes order in the *Marriage Feast of the Lapiths*, whereas the centaurs, the disruptors of the feast who attempt to carry off the Lapithian brides, are characterized by diagonals and curved lines. Verticals and horizontals here express Apollonian order and discipline, whereas the totally opposite type of energy of Dionysus, the god of inebriation, pleasure, creativity, and the irrational is shown by curved lines and diagonals. The fact that both energies are balanced harmoniously in the composition constitutes the classical Greek balance of opposites. In *Cassandra* (from the Oresteia) (Slide Twenty-Eight), the conflict of the human, doomed prophetess who desires to live is shown in the curved lines of the red-cloaked figure. The inhuman rigidity of intransigent fate is depicted by the horizontal lines joined with verticals and pallid colors. The vivid red is used to express human vitality as it does in Rubens’ Baroque art, while the pallid colors are used to communicate the lifelessness of oppressive fate. Other aspects of color will be covered below.

Light is crucial in any discussion of the spiritual because it can be seen physically, yet it partakes, in a way, of the immateriality of the spiritual. It is very often used to suggest spiritual light, as in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* and Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, both of which involve a progression from darkness to light, or spiritual darkness to spiritual light. Any discussion of St. John’s Gospel must include the Evangelist’s endless references to, and emphasis on light that is always used to symbolize spiritual light. The *Sacred Heart* (Slide Twenty-Nine), the Baroque vision of Christ’s Heart aflame with love for mankind as seen by the Visitation nun, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, shows a symbolic use of light.

It also suggests the relationship of light to warmth. Fire is a constant symbol in the Old and New Testament, which can represent Divine Love (Moses’ Burning Bush and Pentecost) or destruction (the fires of hell), depending on the context. If warmth is associated with God, coldness is associated with evil. In Dante’s *Inferno*, Lucifer is at the center of hell, encased in a block of ice, while St. Teresa of Ávila, in her vision of hell, saw it as a very cold place. The medieval mystic St. Gertrude asked the Devil, “Who are you?” and he said “I am coldness itself.” Abraham Rattner’s *Pietá* uses cold colors to communicate grief and death, whereas the same artist’s *Moses* uses very warm colors to show the rage of the prophet before he smashed the Ten Commandments. Raphael uses a balanced triadic color scheme of yellow, red, and blue especially in his Madonnas, the colors used by the Greeks when they colored their pediments. This balance suggests a spiritual simplicity and clarity that is seen also in Mondrian’s abstract rectilinear compositions that also employ a primary triadic color scheme.

Secondary colors and their mutations convey a sophistication such as is seen in the work of Parmigianino and Michelangelo and other Mannerist artists, and decadence in the nocturnal works of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, such as his bordello scenes.
The University of Detroit Student Chapel (Slide Thirty) was remodeled from an already existing classroom. It is designed so that both light and color work together in order to establish a focal point at the altar. Stained glass is deeper hued at the farthermost ends, and gradually becomes paler toward the center. Drapery was also chosen that gradually becomes lighter toward the center. The drapery diffuses the light from the windows and relates the panes of glass so that the contrast between each pane is mitigated, much like a glaze in oil painting. The panes of glass in the oak altar also progress from dark at the ends to lighter color in the center. The color of the walls and also the rug go from darker to lighter to flow with the color and value progression of the windows and the glass.

The ancient Egyptians were probably the first to be preoccupied with value progression, as is seen in their Temple of Horus at Edfu. The visitor enters through the pylon gateway, passes through the open courtyard, exposed to the bright sun, then proceeds through the first hypostyle hall, which is dimmer in illumination. (This temple still has its roof because it was covered with the sands of the Sahara until the nineteenth century). The visitor then moves on to the second hypostyle hall that is still dimmer, and then to the holy of holies, which is very dark, and which contained the cult statue of Horus. The idea was to impress the viewer with the power and mystery of the Egyptian religion.

The Presentation of the Child Mary in the Temple (Slide Thirty-One) also shows a progression from dark to light, but the dark is at the bottom, and the light is at the top. One reason for this is to anchor the painting enough to give it sufficient weight, to dramatize the idea of ascent, and to show a gradual spiritualization symbolized by the idea of ascent. In St. Peter’s Epistles, the writer praises God who led him out of darkness into his wonderful light. Still another reason for the value progression is to give the work greater depth and feeling of space. This idea of ascent is present in the Psalm “I rejoiced when I heard them say: ‘Let us go up to the house of the Lord.’” There also is a progression from cool darker colors to warm lighter ones, and the significance of their usage should be clear after what was stated above. (The relation of space to the spiritual will be covered below.)

The Portrait of Adrienne von Lates (Slide Thirty-Two) (niece of Zsa Zsa Gabor) also shows the progression from dark at the bottom to light at the top, which anchors the figure, while dissolving at gradually as it ascends. The pen and ink Windhover Cover (Slide Thirty-Three) also progresses from dark at the bottom to light at the top, effecting a feeling of space.

Stylization, which is present in the light and dark distribution in the above mentioned, can also be present in shapes. This is frequently used in art that expresses the spiritual and religious. Stylization is a deliberate departure from reality on the part of the artist. Insofar as it departs from reality, it appropriately separates the work of art from physical, mundane references. It also lends itself to symbolic interpretation that is so important in art that deals with the spiritual. It is interesting to note here that stylization dates from the Neolithic Period, the period that recognized the existence of the spiritual. This period also began religion and ritual as a way of dealing with spiritual forces. This period also invented the symbol, as can be clearly seen on Neolithic ceramic work. Pentecost (Slide Thirty-Four) uses stylized shapes and light distribution to symbolize the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. The figures are stylized by simplification, and fire is also stylized in the painting. Fire is stylized because fire can symbolize, depending on the context, the Fire of Divine Love, as seen in the vision of St. Teresa of Ávila which was rendered in sculpture by Bernini, or destruction, as seen in the destruction of Sodom.
Simplification, a kind of stylization, makes a special appeal to the imagination because of what it suggests. As an old peasant woman said of Matisse’s faceless religious figures at Vence, “I can imagine any face I want in those images on the wall.” Simplification is also seen in the bronze sculpture of the Mother of God, entitled Ark of the Covenant (Slide Thirty-Five). The simplification emphasizes the compactness of the form, in addition to calling attention to purposeful omissions.

The Interior of the Temple of Hathor at Dendera, Egypt, (Slide Thirty-Six) offers an appeal to the imagination in its use of empty spatial voids to emphasize the powerful simplicity of Egyptian religious architecture. An exciting contrast is provided by the endless hieroglyphs that cover the surfaces.

Eve, (Slide Thirty-Seven) from the Genesis account, stylizes by means of fragmentation of the shapes. This makes possible an ambivalent spatial forward and backward movement. The Madonna and Child (after Giovanni Bellini) (Slide Thirty-Eight), takes the composition and drawing of the original and distributes color and value in unreal, stylized way in order to add spatial ambivalence and lessen the three-dimensional aspect of the painting. In St. Ignatius (Slide Thirty-Nine), slender, vertical, shapes running through the standing figure of the saint contribute a feeling of upward movement and dignity, as well as integrating the background with the foreground, as in Eve.

Spatial relationships are usually simplified in stained glass work, since the medium does not lend itself easily to great sophistication in this area. The stained glass Mural of the Detroit Skyline (Slide Forty) in Cobo Hall, Detroit, simplifies space in order to focus on the glass medium. The detail of the windows of the Stained Glass Doors (Slide Forty One) in the University of Detroit Student Chapel uses the sunburst motif that dominates the Chapel inside, and has a transparent center to allow visibility of the interior without opening the door, which would be distracting to the congregation.

Space is very important symbol as a bearer of spiritual messages. In the Psalms “He has led me into a vast space because he has loved me” emphasizes the freedom of the world of the spirit. This freedom is very often conveyed by the freedom suggested by deep space. The romantic, mystical landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich are really icons that, in their formal stylization and symbolic use of light, communicate the vast mystery of the earth’s Creator. The Symbolic Crucifixion (Slide Forty-Three) uses data from space age technology photographs to express the vast implications of it subject.

Value perspective is a way of giving a feeling of space without necessarily depending on linear, or scientific perspective. A feeling of space can therefore relate closely to the concept of light. The Obelisk Heralds the Dawn (Slide Forty-Four), recalls visually the Egyptian obelisk and its purpose: to announce the coming of light into the world. In this painting, light areas come forward, and the dark ones go back to create a feeling of depth appropriate to the dawning of light.

The reverse is seen in The Last Communion of Mary Magdalen I (Slide Forty-Five) in which the dark shapes come forward while the light areas go back, establishing the feeling of deep space appropriate to the subject, the joining of the human (in the foreground) with the Infinite, expressed by endless space.
Veronica’s Veil (Slide Forty-Six) recalls the legend of Veronica wiping the Face of Christ during His Passion. As a reward for her charity, she received the imprint of the Redeemer’s Face on the cloth. As seen in the aforementioned painting of the obelisk, light areas come forward against the dark ground. Planes that come forward on the face are shown as lighter than those that go back. It was hoped, in the creation of the work, that the combination of the face’s symmetry and the fact that it is in repose would suggest some of the inner peace that characterizes images of the Buddha, or Odilon Redon’s Closed Eyes. (Green is often used to art to communicate peace.) Perhaps the green color, along with the predominance of black in the painting suggests death, just as cool colors, in The Journey from Calvary (Slide Forty-Seven) suggest the absence of life, as they do in Abraham Rattner’s aforementioned Pietà. Warm colors, in The Last Communion of Mary Magdalen II (Slide Forty-Seven) can convey a psychological warmth, as is intended in this painting, or a more intense feeling such as the anger present in Rattner’s previously cited Moses, when the prophet smashes the Ten Commandments upon witnessing the fickleness of the chosen people.

The austerity shown in the life of the Discalced Carmelite nun, Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity (Slide Forty-Nine), who concentrated, with great simplicity, solely on the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity, is shown in the use of white and black and gray. An attempt is made to suggest the interior glory concealed in such a cloistered life by the use of silver foil in combination with the monochromatic color scheme. The use of metallic materials is often used in religious art from ancient Sumer to the present to suggest the glory of the other world.

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All of the visual material shown during the lecture and itemized above is work done by Brother Jerome Pryor, S. J. Both text and a visual material are being placed on his Web Page: http://xavier.xu.edu/~laco/brpryor. His e-mail address at Xavier University is pryor@xavier.xu.edu.