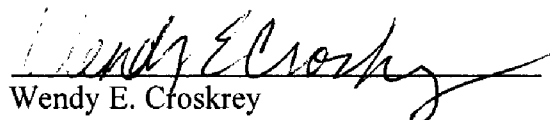


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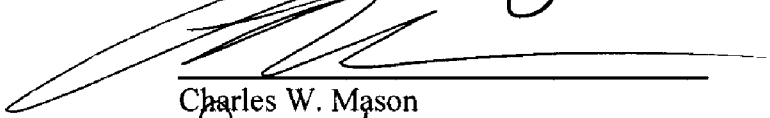
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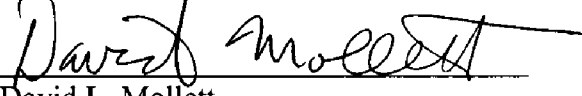
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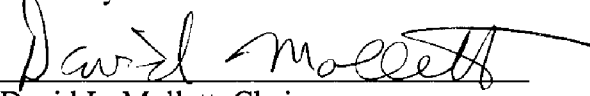
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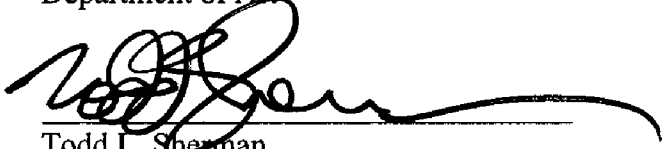
  
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COSMIC DUST

A

PROJECT

Presented to the Faculty  
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

By

Maria Belina S. Manalang, M.A.

Fairbanks, AK

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## Table of Contents

Signature Page.....	ii
Title Page.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
List of Figures.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Artistic Influences.....	5
Artistic Process.....	13
Artistic Philosophy.....	17
The Paintings.....	21
Conclusion.....	37
Bibliography.....	39

*For my sisters Mae and Ginny.*

## List of Figures

Fig.1 <i>Paz, Virginia</i> .....	6
Fig.2 <i>Maria Anicia</i> .....	6
Fig.3 <i>Die Milchstrasse</i> by Anselm Kiefer.....	8
Fig.4 <i>Skull Field</i> .....	8
Fig.5 <i>Bilderstreit</i> by Anselm Kiefer.....	9
Fig.6 <i>White Water Circle</i> by Richard Long.....	9
Fig.7 <i>A Line and Tracks in Bolivia</i> by Richard Long.....	10
Fig.8 <i>Tasman Sea, Ngarupupu</i> , by Hiroshi Sugimoto.....	13
Fig.9 <i>Ocean</i> by Vija Celmins.....	14
Fig.10 <i>Afrun 1 (White)</i> by James Turrell.....	15
Fig.12 Adding particulate matter.....	16
Fig.13 <i>Wheat Field</i> .....	17
Fig.14 <i>Blue Ice</i> .....	18
Fig.15 Charcoal powder.....	19
Fig.16 Wet process.....	19
Fig.17 <i>Autobiography</i> .....	22
Fig.18 <i>Bone Fragments 1</i> .....	23
Fig.19 <i>Bone Fragments 5</i> .....	24
Fig.20 <i>Bone Fragments 2</i> .....	26

Fig.21 <i>Hybrid Black</i> .....	27
Fig.22 <i>Hybrid White</i> .....	27
Fig.23 <i>White Belt</i> .....	28
Fig.24 <i>Red Belt</i> .....	28
Fig.25 <i>Fisheye</i> .....	30
Fig.26 <i>Dark Center</i> .....	30
Fig.27 <i>Planetary</i> .....	31
Fig.28 <i>Silver Quarter Moon</i> .....	32
Fig.29 <i>Supernova</i> .....	33
Fig.30 <i>Red Spiral Galaxy</i> .....	33
Fig.31 <i>White Moon</i> .....	34
Fig.32 <i>Brown Moon</i> .....	34
Fig.33 <i>Red Planet</i> .....	35
Fig.34 <i>Mares Blanco</i> .....	35
Fig.35 <i>Large Galaxy 1</i> .....	36
Fig.36 <i>Egg White</i> .....	37
Fig.37 <i>Floating Egg</i> .....	38
Fig.38 <i>Detail, Floating Egg</i> .....	38
Fig.39 <i>Tulip Top</i> .....	39
Fig.40 <i>Late Planet</i> .....	40

## Introduction

My thesis is a body of work collectively entitled *Cosmic Dust*. It consists of different series of paintings that I've produced as a Master of Fine Arts student here at University of Alaska Fairbanks. These series are the *Drip Paintings*, *Celestial Objects*, and *Ellipsoids*. Elements from different series sometimes combine to form hybrid paintings. Although I have categorized my paintings into these three series, they have many elements in common. They are all related to natural phenomena involving continuous cycles and the effects of gravitational force.

The *Drip Paintings* are inspired by visions of landscape, dividing the canvas using a horizon into an upper section ("the sky"), and a lower section, ("the ground"). The large scale sizes of the canvases are conducive to creating the illusion of an environment. The *Drip Paintings* are significant because they generated painting techniques utilized in subsequent series.

*Celestial Objects* is a series of paintings in two size scales: one approximately two-foot square, the other about four-foot square. Most of the paintings are in a square format and have a radially symmetric compositional structure. Basically, they are circle-in-a-square compositions. This structure lends itself to images of celestial bodies such as planets or moons.

Long before I considered becoming an artist, I wanted to be an astronomer. As a child I was fascinated by the moon and space travel. In college, I was enthralled by black holes and warped spacetime. Later, it became evident that I was much more interested in painting the moon than in studying it. I went to art school<sup>1</sup> after I had obtained a Master's degree<sup>2</sup> in Physics.

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<sup>1</sup> I studied art at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

<sup>2</sup> I obtained my master's degree from SUNY Buffalo.

The genesis of *Celestial Objects* was not my interest in the moon, but grief at my eldest sister's passing. I became preoccupied with the idea of fragmented objects after I viewed and held her cremated remains. Viewing the remains before they were pulverized helped me to understand the process of cremation. Recognizable bone fragments remain after cremation; these are then put through a grinder to convert them into powdered form. Although these paintings originated from the concept of fragmentation, they have evolved into images that evoke celestial objects and cosmic dust. This evolution has a certain logic; human remains eventually turn into dust.

The textures in *Celestial Objects* recall geological phenomena as well. The circular shape serves as a symbol of a continuous cycle, whether the cycle is biological, geological, or cosmological. The most basic biological cycle is that of birth and death. On the geological and cosmological scale, cycles take much more time than the human life cycle. Geological cycles are intertwined with the evolution of life on earth when we consider how the crust's stratification records earth's history. On the cosmological scale, stars start out as nebulae, form protostars, become Main Sequence Stars like our Sun, become Red Giants, then planetary nebulae, then white dwarfs, and eventually stop emitting light as black dwarfs.

Before embarking on this *Celestial Objects* series, I felt a need to paint something that explicitly expressed my grief at the sudden death of my sister, Virginia Paz M. Katigbak, in June 2014. I cut a coffin shaped hole in one of my paintings and painted in in neutral tones. Then I constructed a wrapped body shape out of wood and cloth.





Fig.1 Paz, *Virginia*, 72"x 43", 2014

As of this writing, another one of my sisters, Maria Anicia M. Sta. Ana, passed away suddenly last August 30, 2015. Once again I had to paint my grief in *Maria Anicia*. This loss is still very fresh but I must set it aside in order to continue painting.



Fig.2 *Maria Anicia*, 42"x 42", 2015

The third series included in this thesis, *Ellipsoids*, grew out of my interest in astronomy and celestial dynamics. In these paintings, the structural underpinning is provided by repeated elliptical strokes. These marks reference spiral galaxies and the precession of orbits in space.

The paintings included in this thesis bear witness to a natural progression of interrelated series, from allowing paint to drip to drawing elliptical shapes, from layering drips to layering textures and lines. They involve gravitational force, from paint dripping down to Earth, to planets orbiting in space.

### Artistic Influences

Every artist is inspired and influenced by other artists; I am no exception. There are a handful of artists whose works have continually inspired me and informed my work. The heavily textured landscapes of Anselm Kiefer have always appealed to me. However, I do not share his concern with incorporating social and political issues in artwork.

I discovered Kiefer in art school in the 90's, where my work was often compared to his landscapes, primarily because we used the same imagery - fields with rows receding into the distance towards a vanishing point. Kiefer's painting *Die Milchstrasse (The Milky Way)* shows such a field.<sup>3</sup> One of my recent landscape paintings, *Skull Field*, also features a field. In both imagery and choice to limit the color palette, it recalls Kiefer's work.



Fig.3 *Die Milchstrasse* by Anselm Kiefer

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<sup>3</sup> Anselm Kiefer, *Die Milchstrasse*, 1985-87, emulsion paint, oil, acrylic and shellac on canvas with applied wires and lead, Albright-Knox art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, accessed December 6, 2015, <http://www.albrightknox.org/collection/collection-highlights/piece:die-milchstrasse/>

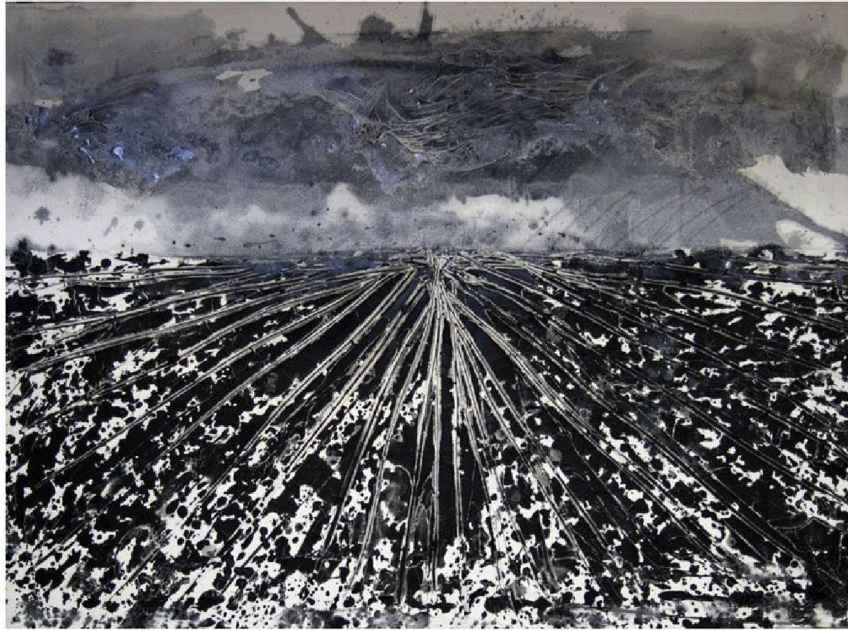


Fig.4 *Skull Field*, 2014

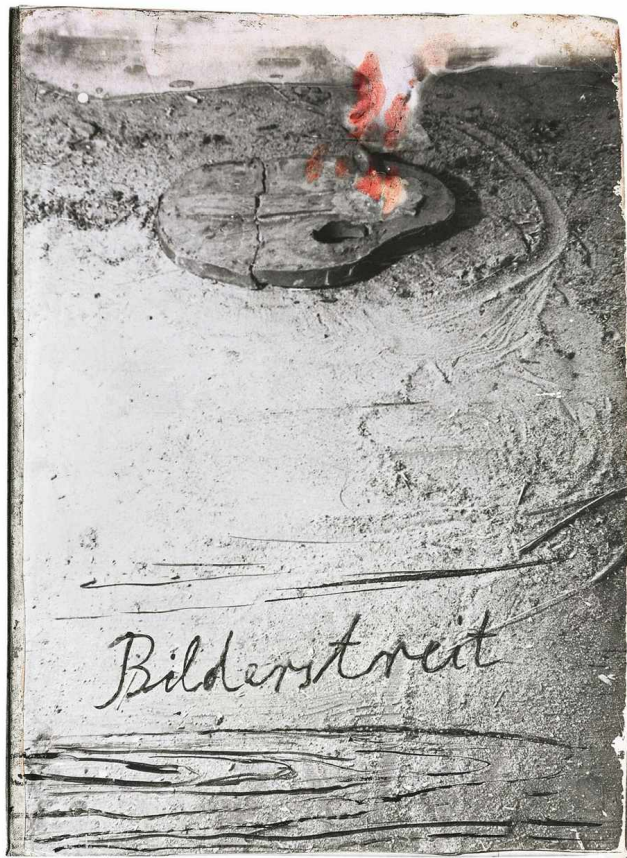


Fig.5 *Bilderstreit* by Anselm Kiefer

Kiefer's *Bilderstreit (Iconoclastic Controversy)* is a black and white landscape photograph partially obscured with shellac; the shellac taints the realism of the image. Though this piece is about iconoclasts who advocated the worship of religious images, and iconodulists, who were against such a practice, its meaning is open to different interpretations.<sup>4</sup> This ambiguity is something I aim for in my paintings.

I am inspired by the art of Richard Long. His *Mudworks*, in particular, are circles painted with wet mud. An example is *White Water Circle*.<sup>5</sup>



Fig.6 *White Water Circle* by Richard Long

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<sup>4</sup> Anselm Kiefer, *Bilderstreit*, 1980, shellac on original photograph on cardboard, Guggenheim Bilbao, Bilbao, Spain, accessed December 6, 2015, <http://www.guggenheim-bilbao.es/en/works/iconoclastic-controversy/>

<sup>5</sup> Richard Long, *White Water Circle*, 1994, mud, accessed December 6, 2015, <http://www.richardlong.org/Exhibitions/2011exhibitupgrades/whitewatercirc.html>

Richard Long takes walks in the landscape and leaves marks of his presence on the landscape, which he then documents with photography. In *A Line and Tracks in Bolivia*, he walked across the land back and forth along a straight line until he had created a visible furrow to mark his path.<sup>6</sup> I find the resulting photograph beautiful. It conveys the vastness of the land. To be in a vast expanse of landscape or ocean allows me to realize that there is something bigger than myself; my concerns don't seem so important. It gives me a sense of peace.



Fig.7 *A Line and Tracks in Bolivia* by Richard Long

I respond to the sublime depictions of the ocean. Being from the Philippines, I feel a deep connection to the sea and am an avid scuba diver. I am entranced by Hiroshi Sugimoto's large format photographs of the sea. Sugimoto's ocean photographs convey a sense of infinity, both in space and in time. Time and distance have always held a depth of meaning for me. Time contracts and expands according to how it is experienced. Places distant from each other start to blur together. I have experienced the blurring of time and place. Having lived in different cities, having to move as financial circumstances change, I would once in awhile wake from sleep, unsure which city I was in.

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Long, *A Line and Tracks in Bolivia*, 1981, accessed December 6, 2015, <http://www.richardlong.org/Sculptures/2011sculupgrades/bolivia.html/>

In Sugimoto's long exposure photographs such as *Tasman Sea, Ngarupupu*, the movements of the ocean are recorded in layers, one on top of another.<sup>7</sup> The moments are recorded in a single image. The image is still, but what led up to it was a series of infinitesimal moments that contain its history. The image is the present moment.



Fig.8 *Tasman Sea, Ngarupupu* by Hiroshi Sugimoto

I want to be in the present without denying the past. Everything that led up to now has made me who I am at this moment. These are the thoughts that Sugimoto's ocean images evoke in me. I find them to so deep that my reaction to them cannot be completely conveyed through words. Likewise, I appreciate Vija Celmins' depictions of the sea such as the lithograph *Ocean*.<sup>8</sup>

Art critic Richard Armstrong has this to say of Celmins' ocean views: "Abandoning specific incidents in favor of more neutral and ambiguous imagery, she arrived at a suggestive, contemplative space."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Tasman Sea, Ngarupupu*, 1990, gelatin silver print, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, accessed December 5, 2015,

<http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collections-online/artwork/10496>

<sup>8</sup> Vija Celmins, *Ocean*, 1975, lithograph on paper, Tate Gallery, London, accessed December 6, 2015,

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/celmins-ocean-p78336>

<sup>9</sup> Richard Armstrong, "Of Earthly Objects and Stellar Sights: Vija Celmins," *Art in America*, May 1981, 104.

The starkness of these monochromatic images have a power to evoke the vastness of the ocean. The limitless sea reminds us that we are part of something bigger; we are, each of us, part of the cosmos. Interestingly, Celmins also created drawings from photographs of galaxies. Galaxies, like the ocean, epitomize the vastness of space.



Fig.9 *Ocean* by Vija Celmins

James Turrell works with light and space. I enjoy his simple, elegant constructions and the environments he creates for them. The light cube in *Afrum 1 (White)*, situated in the corner and in the dark, has an atmosphere of mystery and spirituality.<sup>10</sup> I imagine myself meditating in that space with the light cube as the focal point of contemplation. “Such non-verbal pleasures and/or mystical experiences are freely available in Turrell’s installations...”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> James Turrell, *Afrum 1 (White)*, 1967, projected light, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, accessed December 6, 2015, <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collections-online/artwork/4084>

<sup>11</sup> Nancy Marmer, “James Turrell: The Art of Deception,” *Art in America*, May 1981, 97.





Fig.10 *Afrum I (White)* by James Turrell, 1967

All these artists create works that involve landscape or landscape photography. Most of them use photography either as a medium or as a way of documenting work. The subject matter is of a place or a site specific project. The landscapes are often natural but sometimes synthetic as in Turrell's light installations. Images that depict the human impact on landscape enable me to form a connection with the land. This is especially important because I'm no longer based in my country of birth. I strive to create a sense of place wherever I am.

I have a longstanding interest in rocks, land formations, and geological phenomena. As a child, my most cherished toy was a geology laboratory set. I collected rocks and searched for fossils. I frequented the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh (where I spent third and fourth grades)<sup>12</sup> to study their fossil collection. Upon returning to Manila, I founded a fossil hunting club and published the club newsletter. Years later, in at the academy, I did a series of paintings and etchings depicting tectonic plates and volcanoes. My abstract oil paintings of subducting tectonic plates won the Elena and Will Barnet Prize for Abstract Art two years in a row. After graduation, I traveled to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park on a scholarship. Two years later I mounted an exhibit entitled *Fossils and Volcanoes* at the University of the Philippines' Jorge B. Vargas

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<sup>12</sup> At the time, my mother was pursuing a PhD at the University of Pittsburgh.

Museum. The show consisted of intaglio etchings and paintings. One of the paintings exhibited was *Trilobite*.



Fig.11 *Trilobite*, 24"x 24", 1994

## Artistic Process

My paintings are done in a variety of art materials: acrylic, gesso, matte medium, modeling paste, graphite, charcoal, Conté crayon, and powdered pigment. I use matte medium as an adhesive agent for the various particulate matter. I also comminute other materials, such as ceramic shards, and add them to the paintings. Grinding up hard ceramic materials is reminiscent of the grinding of bones into fine particles after cremation.



Fig.12 Adding particulate matter for texture

I start a painting using pencil marks, acrylic washes, or modeling paste. The process is an exploration of materials and techniques. The development of the image is undoubtedly influenced by my interest in landscape, geology, and astronomy, as well as my personal aesthetic.

In *Drip Paintings* I experimented with different viscosities of diluted paint to form drip patterns. These large scale paintings took an enormous amount of time as the success of the painting depended on the patterns formed by the final layer. If the final layer didn't drip in the patterns intended, the cycle would have to start all over again. The layering process had to be

repeated, starting with a base layer which divided the canvas into a black upper part and white lower part. Only after this base layer was dry could I begin to apply the drips. Subsequent layers of colors have to dry between applications. During my experimentation, I discovered a way of dripping paint so that it would form intricate filamentary patterns on top of the underlying paint layer. *Wheat Field* and *Blue Ice* exemplify the technique using multiple layers of dripping paint.

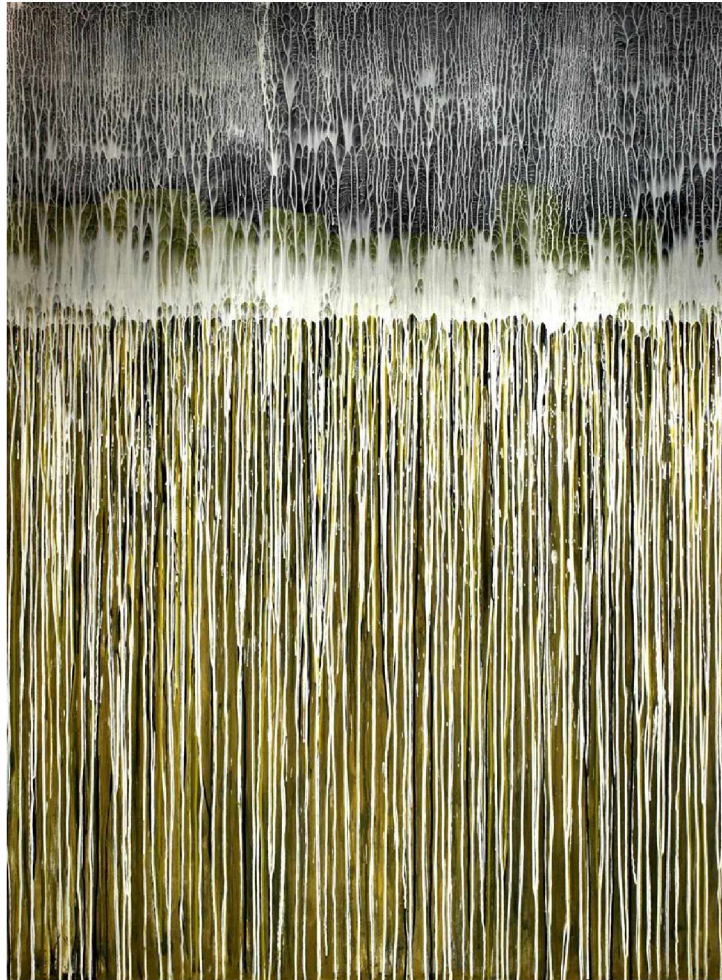


Fig.12 *Wheat Field*, 88"x 66", 2014



Fig.13 *Blue Ice*, 2015

Figs.14-15 Illustrate how materials can adhere to the painting surface via matte medium.



Fig.14 Charcoal powder in matte medium

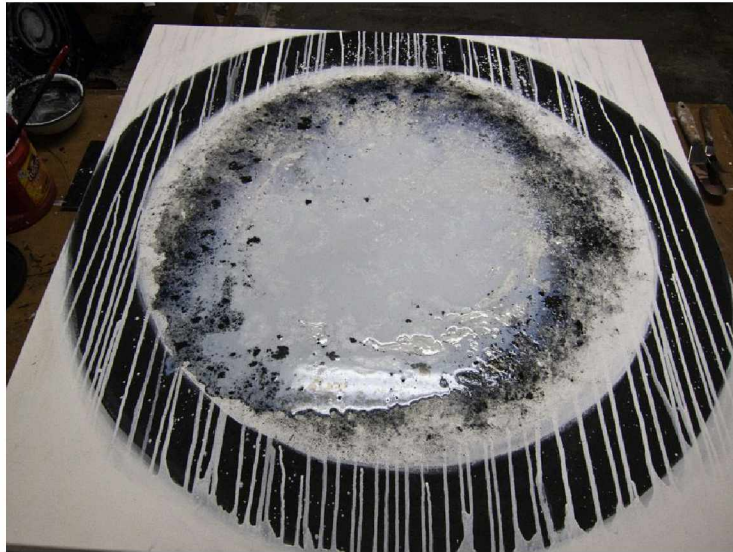


Fig.15 Wet process

I start the *Ellipsoid* paintings by making large gestural marks. The resulting lines of overlapping ellipses create the foundation for each painting. I make additional marks using gestures to spatter diluted paint. After that I simplify the composition. It's usually difficult to resolve these paintings and at times I'm tempted to give up. But then I remember that some good paintings do come out of this process, even though it doesn't seem organic. As I work on these paintings, I feel some uncertainty about the direction that I have chosen. I may change directions many times in a single painting.

## Artistic Philosophy

My philosophy of art-making is influenced by the Zen Buddhist concept of mindfulness.

<sup>13</sup> I start with a spare composition, and an idea of how the tonal values or colors might be distributed on the canvas. Working instinctively, the painting develops with a minimum of pre-planning. I am concerned with the process of creation being genuine and uncontrived. I do not want to be consciously aware of my decision-making process.

I believe that creativity is an organic process. I believe that an artwork has its own destination, and my job is to help get it there. The idea that creativity is something that happens to me and not something that I do is shared by others.<sup>14</sup> This doesn't mean that direction never changes; it is flexible. I try to observe the artwork and allow it to suggest what I should do. I put down one mark, and that mark suggests another mark. Marks accumulate and they suggest tonal values, colors, or materials.

Ideally, while painting, I would be in a state of optimal experience or *flow* as elucidated by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi:

“I developed a theory of optimal experience based on the concept of *flow* - the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer experience of doing it.”<sup>15</sup>

In order to begin a painting, I have to start somewhere. To paint starting from nothing is daunting and nearly impossible.<sup>16</sup> So I start with the format, say, a square canvas. It's easier to

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<sup>13</sup> Thich Naht Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation*, ed. Mobi Ho (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1987), 14.

<sup>14</sup> Bence Nanay, *The Philosophy of Creativity*, eds. Scott Barry Kaufman and Elliot Samuel Paul (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 26-28.

<sup>15</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 4.

<sup>16</sup> Many times I have tried to start with nothing and failed.

start with a compositional structure such as a shape, line, or pattern. I have to have structure; otherwise, I'm lost.

I have used a pattern of parallel lines in several series of paintings. I've used parallel lines inside a square within a larger square. I've used triangular shapes, diagonal lines and horizon lines to divide space. And of course, there's the circle-in-a-square composition.

Structure may also be provided by an idea of a thing. In *Celestial Objects*, this often meant an idea of a moon, planet, or nebula.

The painting below, *Autobiography*, uses a pattern of single brushstrokes of black paint. The idea behind the painting was that each brushstroke represented a life event, and the accumulation of brushstrokes would then represent my life. Each brushstroke is applied to the canvas and cannot be modified. This is the last painting I exhibited in New England before moving to Alaska.

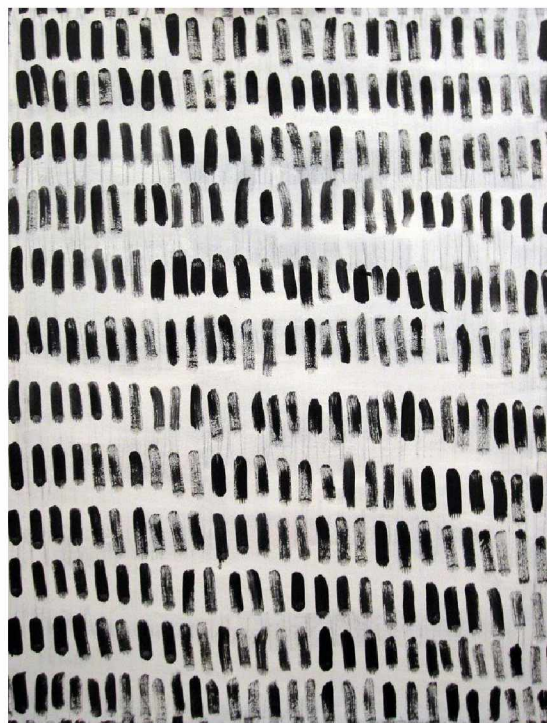


Fig.16 *Autobiography*, 42"x32", 2012



When I'm painting, I want painting is to be the only activity I am engaged in. This doesn't preclude automatic processing which capitalizes on previous experience and training. I rely on this unconscious processing.<sup>17</sup> I avoid analyzing the process and premature self-censorship. I need to have faith all the while that the painting will ultimately be successful.

Gerhard Richter wrote: "One has to believe in what one is doing, one has to commit oneself inwardly, in order to do painting...but if one lacks the commitment, there is nothing left to do. Then it is best to leave it alone."<sup>18</sup>

Richter expresses the paradox of not thinking while painting: "I want to leave everything as it is. I therefore neither plan nor invent; I add nothing and omit nothing. At the same time, I know that I inevitably shall plan, invent, alter, make and manipulate. But I don't know that."<sup>19</sup>

### **The Paintings**

The very first painting in the *Celestial Objects* series, *Bone Fragments 1*, began with three white fragments forming a horizontal band across the canvas. The three fragments refer to the bone fragment I retrieved after my sister's cremation. It started out as a single fragment but later broke into three pieces. I brought the fragments to my favorite dive site in the Philippines and left them there with the hope that coral would grow on them eventually. My friend and I said our prayers, and after that we noticed a majestic sea turtle right next to us. I realized then that it is possible to shed tears underwater and still keep breathing from a regulator.

The idea for *Bone Fragments 1* came to me all at once during art history class. I envisioned a black background with three bone fragments arranged horizontally. I painted a

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<sup>17</sup> Stanislas Dehaene, *Consciousness and the Brain: Deciphering How the Brain Codes Our Thoughts*, (New York: Viking, 2014), 14-17, Kindle.

<sup>18</sup> Dietmar Elger and Obrist, Hans Ulrich, eds., *Gerhard Richter-Writings*, (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2009), 70.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

square canvas black, let it dry, and applied thick modeling paste as the fragments. I put several layers of paste to build the fragments up so they would stand out in relief. After that I put down a layer of matte medium everywhere except on the fragments, and started sprinkling drying bits of modeling paste all over the canvas. I then reinforced the black paint around the fragments, forming a circular boundary. The particulate bits of modeling paste inside the circle remained white, while the bits outside the circle were painted black.



Fig.19 *Bone Fragments I*, 20"x 20", 2014

The painting has strong contrast in tonal values, ranging from black to white. The contrast focuses attention on the bone fragments. Like sculptural relief, they protrude from the two-dimensional plane of the canvas. It is a successful painting despite the fact that its intended meaning might be opaque without the background information. I did not attempt to portray space or volume but the area inside the circle can be seen as a deep space, receding far into the distance, while the three fragments remain in the foreground, floating in space.

*Bone Fragments 5* features a band of modeling paste superimposed on a previous band toned with a brown wash. Underneath this toned band is another band, applied earlier in the process. The dominant color of the painting is brown, with the area inside the circle being lighter



Fig.20 *Bone Fragments 5*, 20"x 20", 2015

in value and having more texture than the surrounding area. The circle just barely fits within the square. The circle may be interpreted either as a solid spherical object, or a circular aperture. The white band could either be something on the sphere's surface, or an object floating in space.

On the one hand, the subtle variation of tonal values within the circle, as well as some scattered fragments of sand or modeling paste, reinforces the illusion of a three-dimensional sphere. On the other hand, the lighter inner perimeter supports the illusion of viewing space through an aperture. More specifically, the subject of the painting could be a celestial body such as the moon, or of outer space viewed through a telescope. Despite the spatial ambiguity, the texture in the circle causes the sphere to emerge as the dominant illusion. The borders of the

circle aren't sharp; they fade into the background. The dark brown background, upon closer inspection, reveals traces of texture and minute variations in color, conveying a depth in the darkness.

One other interpretation is the circle as a magnified view through a microscope. In that case the scattered particles and the white band fragments can be interpreted as almost anything microscopic. Whichever interpretation the viewer chooses, the painting can accommodate. It is my intention to leave the interpretation of the painting completely up to the viewer.

*Bone Fragments 2* is the second painting in what was to be the bone fragment series. I've digitally added a gray frame to delineate the painting on the white paper. In this second version the background is light-valued, the central area is unprimed canvas, but the bone fragments, though there are now only two, remain white.



Fig.21 *Bone Fragments 2*, 20"x20", 2014

The next two paintings are “hybrid paintings,” wherein elements from different series have been combined. They exhibit some of the dripping techniques acquired from the *Drip Paintings* series. *Hybrid Black* retains the textural qualities of a celestial object but the inchoate background is flattened. In *Hybrid White*, I made the central circle diaphanous, with traces of vertical drips visible through the haze.



Fig.22 *Hybrid Black*, 2014



Fig.23 *Hybrid White*, 2014

As the series continued, I experimented with sharper boundaries, and various treatments of edges, some bordering on graphic design such as *White Belt*, *Red Belt*, and *Fisheye*.



Fig.24 *White Belt* in progress



Fig.25 *Red Belt* in progress

*Dark Center* looks more natural than either *White Belt* or *Red Belt*. It is one of the smaller *Celestial Object* paintings.



Fig.26 *Fisheye*, 42"x 42", 2015

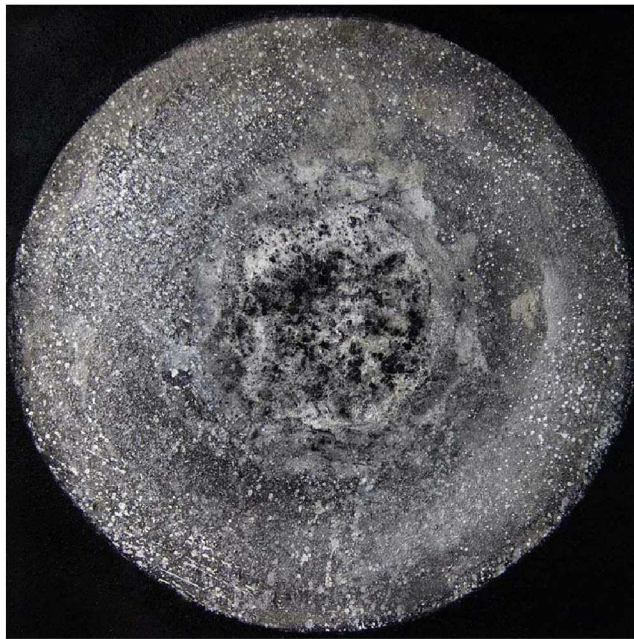


Fig.27 *Dark Center*, 20"x 20", 2015

*Planetary* represents the commitment to deliberately representing a celestial object, sharply delineated from its background space. Around the planet's periphery is a glow implying a source of light behind the planet.



Fig.28 *Planetary*, 20"x20", 2015

Below is a moon painting from circa 2006. I had painted a series of *Moon Paintings* from 2005 to 2006. Celestial objects are a recurrent theme in my painting.



Fig.29 *Silver Quarter Moon*, 2006



In *Celestial Objects*, I continued to experiment with fuzzier boundaries, with the objects being much less delineated, as in *Supernova* and *Red Spiral Galaxy*.<sup>20</sup> These are examples where the method of painting determined the final subject. Dealing with these more literal representations allowed me the freedom to use more colorful pigments.



Fig.30 *Supernova*, 20"x20"

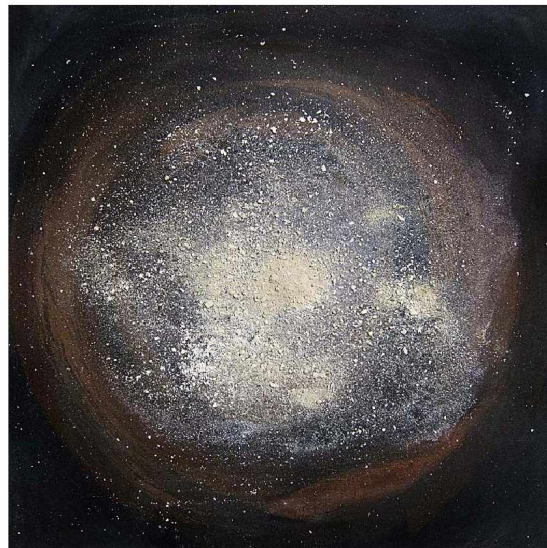


Fig.31 *Red Spiral Galaxy*, 20"x20"

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<sup>20</sup> Galaxies can be spiral, lenticular, or elliptical in shape. I am most attracted to the dynamism of the elliptical lines characteristic of spiral galaxies viewed from the side.

I continued with these series, now consciously depicting moons and planets as in the next four paintings, *White Moon*, *Brown Moon*, *Red Planet*, and *Mares Blanco*.



Fig.32 *White Moon*, 20"x 20", 2015



Fig.33 *Brown Moon*, 20"x 20", 2015



Fig.34 *Red Planet*, 20" x 20", 2015



Fig.35 *Mares Blanco*, 20" x 20", 2015

The first in the *Ellipsoids* series was *Large Galaxy 1*, a painting on unstretched canvas about 60”x 60” in size. It depicts a three-dimensional elliptical galaxy in neutral colors, using black, white, and warm and cool grays. A detail of this painting is shown in Fig.31.



Fig.36 *Large Galaxy 1*, 60”x60”, 2015

I began to introduce some color into this series, which inevitably influenced the total composition. The additional color is predominantly yellow so that the overall effect is still monochromatic. I started working with more sharply defined lines, as in *Egg White*, *Floating Egg*, and *Tulip Top*. The resulting paintings exhibit more tension than the *Celestial Objects* due to the asymmetrical shapes and precarious positioning of the ellipses. The oval shapes define

sculptural objects that seem to possess mass and weight. At this point I am not sure how I feel about this new direction or if I really want to continue in this vein. However, this series does offer possibilities for further exploration. In the end, what more could an artist can ask for?



Fig.37 *Egg White*, 42”x 42”, 2015



Fig.xx *Tulip Top*, 42”x 42”, 2015



Fig.38 *Floating Egg*, 42''x42'', 2015



Fig.39 Detail, *Floating Egg*

I start these *Ellipsoid* paintings by making large gestural marks. The resulting lines of overlapping ellipses create the foundation for each painting. I also make gestural motions to spatter diluted paint. After that I simplify the composition. It's usually difficult to resolve these

paintings and at times I'm tempted to give up. But then I remember that some good paintings do come out of this process, even though they don't appear organic.

I went back to the theme of *Celestial Objects* and painted a large one, entitled *Late Planet*. I realized that a particular series can be paused and resumed at some later time and that, in fact, these recent paintings harken back to the moon paintings of 2005 and the galaxy paintings of 2010. The revisiting of painting themes emerges as yet another cycle, in a universe of cycles.



Fig.41 *Late Planet*, 42"x 42", 2015

### **Conclusion**

In summary, my aim is to create paintings in an instinctive and unrestrained yet precise manner. Along the way there will always be a struggle between opposing forces - the conscious versus the unconscious, control versus abandon, and real versus unreal. Ideally, the process of

creation is in itself a worthwhile experience. This way of working seems likeliest to allow the flow experienced during creation to be shared by the viewer.

It is my hope that these *Cosmic Dust* paintings will serve as objects of contemplation for the viewer. Through them I hope to convey a sense of the infinite - the infinite cosmos and the infinite cycle of life and death. Seen in this light, the death of loved ones and their cremation may be considered a manifestation of an inexorable cycle. The continual processes of change are present everywhere, however much we try to deny it. Death is ineluctable; it comes to each of us even as the cycles continue. Everything ends, but always, something else begins.



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