

SOL KJØK: Artist Statement 2016

While I may be an academic by training, I am not a cerebral painter. Sure, I think a lot about what drives my process and what I am trying to achieve, but the images themselves are not mental constructs: they come from wordless places such as dreams, meditation and other states of altered consciousness. Their truth, revealed in some partial way to the dreamer, suffers from being squeezed through the bottleneck of verbal language.

For me, the creative impulse is to give form to whispering voices arising from the preconscious and unconscious, not an intellectual process adhering to a theoretical superstructure. In fact, I have come to believe that just like the sunlight blocks the stars from view in the morning, our brain veils that very thing I am after: the much larger cosmic context of which we are all part. In our everyday state, we can only see what our brain's filter allows through. Its left hemisphere – which governs linguistics, logic and reason – also generates the sense of being a sharply defined ego or self, and that may be a barrier to knowledge and experience of another and infinitely vaster kind.

I want my images to work like music: a vibrating chord that connects instantly with something deep and joyous, while also occasionally tapping the back of our terrors. Both when creating and looking at art, I am hoping for that moment when “something shatters like ice and we are in the river of our existence. We are aware.”¹ This very special effect, caused by its direct line to our emotions, senses and unconscious, used to be what was specific to art; that which separated it from philosophy and science. This visceral dimension can never be reduced to text, and it is time to bring it back to its rightful place in contemporary art. (Luckily, this movement is now well underway, as too many of us have gone hungry for too long for this vital form of nourishment unique to the arts.)

So, what does the artist do? To me, art should confirm something people have dreamed about – evoke a sense of recognition and connection. Ezra Pound said that the artist is 'the antenna of the race,' an understanding that was echoed by Marshall McLuhan: “Art at its most significant is a Distant Early Warning System that can always be relied on to tell the old culture what is beginning to happen to it.” I, too, believe that artists express the spiritual meaning of their culture: “Every authentic artist is engaged in this creating of the conscience of the race, even though he or she may be unaware of the fact.”²

Can I hold such lofty aspirations for my own work without being insufferably pretentious and vain? Perhaps, since these images are not mine; they are given to me. And I am not their only recipient: over the past decade, eerily similar content has cropped up in the work of other artists in far-flung geographic locations without anyone of us knowing about the others.³ Hence, I have come to think that ideas do not belong to any one individual; they spring from a shared universal source that can be accessed from multiple points. While many are familiar with Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, it is not generally known that several vanguard scientists, scattered across the globe, are now jointly proving that this poetic notion is, in fact, a reality: there is, indeed, a web of consciousness spanning the globe.

This frontier research into the nature of human consciousness, elegantly summarized by investigative journalist Lynne McTaggart in her groundbreaking classic *The Field*⁴, has upended everything that we have hitherto considered scientific certainty about our world. These discoveries – in the wide-ranging fields of physics, medicine, psychology and biology – offer convincing evidence “that **all matter in the universe exists in a web of connection and constant influence**, which often overrides many of the laws of the mechanical Newtonian universe that we used to believe held ultimate sovereignty.”

¹ Louise Erdrich, *The Plague of Doves* (Harper, 2008)

² Rollo May, *The Courage to Create*. (© Rollo May 1975; Norton 1994)

³ Sol Kjøk and Peter Max-Jakobsen, *IN THE AIR* (Copenhagen, 2014)

⁴ Lynne McTaggart, *The Field: The Quest for the Secret Force of the Universe* (HarperCollins Publishers, GB, 2001, updated in 2008)

In my imagery, I aim for a continuous quality where nothing has an endpoint, and one movement flows into the next, like a ribbon. The intertwined bodies floating in space depicted in my works are visual expressions of these intuitively-known concepts – understood by native cultures, mystics, and Eastern religions throughout the ages – that are now finally being validated by the scientific community: the interconnection and unity of all living things; the universal nature of compassion and empathy; the mystery and magic of the human heart. Throughout modern times, the medical paradigm has been that the brain is in control of everything. But according to the scientists working at The Institute for HeartMath in California right now, the heart sends far more information to the brain than the other way round. The heart senses that something is going to happen before it occurs, and therefore, before the brain knows it. ⁵ So finally, hard science is catching up with what religion and philosophers have always known: the heart is the primary access point to what one can call our spirit or higher self.

Such universal, spiritual and essentially timeless concerns may seem to be of a different, earlier era, and thus an anachronism in the contemporary art world. And yes, this may be an old story, but we are only just now at the point where the confluence of knowledge and technology and this very ancient narrative are beginning to come together. The consequence is no less than a **revolutionary paradigm shift**:

“The significance of these findings extends far beyond a validation of extrasensory power or parapsychology. The discovery that quantum effects occur in the world of the tangible could signal an end to the divide in modern physics between the laws of the large and the laws of the quantum particle, and the beginning of a single rule book defining all of life.

Our definition of the physical universe as a collection of isolated objects, our definition of ourselves as just another of those objects, even our most basic understanding of time and space, will have to be recast. At least forty top scientists in academic centers of research around the world have demonstrated that an information transfer constantly carries on between living things, and that thought are simply another form of transmitted energy. We can no longer view ourselves and our thoughts as the private, self-contained workings of an individual brain.”⁶

I see my imagery as a visual testament to this radical new worldview ushered in by quantum physics: The human mind and body are not separate from their environment but a packet of pulsating power constantly interacting with the vast energy sea of the Zero Point Field, which again suggests that consciousness may be central in shaping our world. (Teilhard de Chardin knew this: “Matter is spirit moving slowly enough to be seen.”)

These ideas emerge at this particular moment for a reason: they question the story that science has developed about who and what we are, and that story is very important in driving how we behave. Indeed, the understanding of Darwin that permeates most modern societies is based on a dangerous misreading: in *Descent of Man*, the author mentions *survival of the fittest* exactly twice, while the word *love* appears no less than 95 times...⁷ The basis of human nature is cooperation and interdependence. It is vital for humanity to wake up to the fact that as long as we treat each other as separate, we will continue to have exactly the same world as we have now. Einstein said that “Humanity is going to require a substantially new way of thinking if it is to survive”, and the way out of our current situation is through a modern-day awareness of the age-old understanding that we are all one.

⁵ Psychophysicologist Rollin McCraty, Ph.D, of The Institute for HeartMath (heartmath.org): “The heart is the boss of us.”

⁶ Lynne McTaggart, *The Intention Experiment* (Simon & Schuster, NY, 2007/2008)

⁷ According to *Field Notes on the Compassionate Life* by Marc Ian Barasch, Darwin said that sympathy is the strongest instinct in human nature.