

Artist's Statement - Jack Hughes

As a reformed color field painter, I've come to acknowledge the necessity of truth in art no matter where it takes me. And, in over fifty years as an artist, art has sometimes been my strange and cruel mistress. But I've found if I allow myself freedom of expression, she will take me to new and exciting places. In art, as in life, if I'm unconcerned about where I am *then I'm never lost*. My intent is to simply enjoy, to the best of my abilities, whatever life hands me and to learn from it. It's become a matter of embracing creativity and allowing imagination free rein. When I don't edit or attempt to control the ride, entirely unique vistas open. That's where I find my best work.

I especially enjoy the time between sleeping and waking - the nether world. Instead of shaking off the dream paths I embrace them, eager for discovery. This exhibit exemplifies that state. Usually I'm pretty good at recalling specific characters, symbols and objects from my dream/wakefulness. I begin with a sound idea of what I want to do and allow it to unravel from there. I like to think these paintings are probably what cartoon characters dream about. Art can, and should, be fun - serious fun. So, if it's serious and fun who can possibly have a problem with that?

A few years ago, I built a cabin in the western North Carolina and after spending a couple summers there I noticed some unusual things: animals seemed to arrange themselves in groupings. I also became aware that my brain organized those random groups and they made sense to me: as though the animals had intent or purpose. The more I looked, the more sense my brain made of the groupings. One of the greatest gifts God has given me is the ability to be *easily amazed*. Without that, they would've simply been cows, horses and sheep on a mountainside. I realized our subconscious minds instinctively try to assign order, whether it actually exists or not, to randomness or chaos. This might go back to how our brains evolved.

Prehistoric people tried to find meaning in events and patterns, so they could understand their lives. Until the Scientific Revolution, people looked to shamans, soothsayers, druids and etc. to interpret patterns, rhythms, dreams and seasonal events. And science, also, searches for meaning based on patterns and rhythms. Contemporary humans have taken this idea and created an ultimate organizer: the computer. Really, our entire lives are based upon organizing randomness so we feel comfortable in our world.

Our human brains, perhaps because of a survival instinct, look at completely unrelated objects and attempt to relate them. I decided to expand on this idea by taking cultural icons, childhood images, nether world characters and my life observations and fit them together - I also placed my alter ego into each of the pictures in this exhibit. What I believed would end up as something no one would be capable of making sense of, in reality, became entirely different because of that cerebral drive to assign meaning to symbols, colors, patterns and objects (in the paintings). Curiously, some of my fellow artists have even attributed an almost mystical element to them. The most amazing thing, for me, has been listening to the many differing stories.

I invite each of you to join my creative process and become involved with this show by allowing your imagination to lead you into these paintings, wander around for a while, and discover the story they tell you. I'd love to hear what they're saying! I sincerely hope you enjoy this exhibit. Thank you.

Jack Hughes

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This show is dedicated to Barbara, Bebe and The Cross

