

**The Manifesto
of
Post Conceptual UnGraven
Image
Art Theory**

A Painting's Meaning is Inherent in its Strokes

By

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Founder and Artist**

“And G-d said, ‘Let there be light!’” –*Genesis 1:3*

“All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree.” -- Albert Einstein

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The only essential material element of any painting or drawing is a *stroke*.

The stroke is made to show the intention(s) of its creator. An artist can only physically make one stroke or part of a stroke at a time.

The stroke is placed on a support, such as canvas, which is there to *support* the stroke(s).

Since the stroke is intrinsic, necessary, and basic in a painting or drawing, each stroke is significant. Strokes are to a painting or drawing what elementary physics' essential pre-particles called strings or membranes are to the physical universe. Without strokes there cannot be a painting just as without the essential pre-particles we would not have a physical universe.

Art strokes have been applied with a brush, pen, pencil, crayon, charcoal, needle, hammer, chisel, knife, scissor, stapler, finger, or other body part, or even sprayed, drizzled or poured onto the support, including a screen or woodblock, cut linoleum, etc. To create strokes artists have used the mediums of paint (any), chalk, pigment, thread, paste, glue, paper, thread, metal, rubber, tar, plastic, human bodily secretions, hair, bodies and parts of flora and fauna, oils, pigments of any sort, Mylar, etc.

Nothing but a single stroke is necessary for a work to be defined as a painting or drawing. By this definition a simple painted wall could be considered a painting, and might be considered even a great work of art if it was appropriated as a work of art titled and signed, "R. Mutt."¹

When the intention(s) has meaning that is communicated through its creator's stroke(s) the work can be recognized as art.²

Since the stroke is essential to a painting or drawing, it is the primary way the artist who creates the stroke expresses meaning and intention.

All the design elements of a work are created through its strokes. A stroke can give a painting color, but a painting can exist without colors, for example a stroke of clear gel on glass. Paintings can vary as to form, perspective, design, use of color, and/or any of the other elements, all of which are created through strokes of some sort.

A stroke *always* gives a painting a sculptural dimension as it is physical matter. It may appear to be flat to the naked eye but under a strong microscope any stroke will reveal some surface dimension.

Thus painting is closely aligned to sculpture as both are actually three dimensional works. A sculpture (rectangular box) by Minimalist Donald Judd might be seen as a single stroke, while we know that Michelangelo's *David* was created by his many strokes as he utilized his chisel and other tools.

Photographs differ from paintings and drawings because a film photograph lacks strokes and surface dimension.³ The surface image of a photograph is made all at the same time, and this all-at-the-same-time process continues throughout the lab development of the film.⁴ Regular photographs are an image of a moment while any artwork with more than one stroke is an image of moments (accumulated time).

So strokes also point to time as an element in a work, at least in relation to the time it took to physically accomplish the work. We may not recognize the time the artist paused between strokes, or stepped away from the work to contemplate it, but we do readily recognize the time and effort it took to make the strokes. For instance, imagine a 6 by 12 foot unprimed canvas with one small stroke in its center. Now imagine or recall an intricate Faberge egg. Which work took more time to *physically* create?

Although strokes have been understood to be important to a work of art, they have not been viewed as *the most essential element of a work*. Modern and Contemporary art movements have been founded to explore and exalt light, color, perspective, naturalism, form, abstraction, narrative subject and lack thereof. No previous art theory or movement has focused specifically upon the strokes. Strokes have only been treated as elements in a work.

In painting, a stroke corresponds to a note (sound vibration) in music, the slightest movement in dance, and words in literature, but since a single letter, number or stroke can symbolize an idea in many languages, then a single one stroke letter can be a artistic stroke, especially if it represents a phonetic sound. Slight motion, sound vibration, or emerging form (stroke) are also ways to describe a pre-particle string, energy or membrane of elementary physics.

The artist's intention for a stroke defines the stroke. When Pissarro and Monet changed the history of art by focusing on depicting light rather than the narrative subject of a painting, their strokes changed dramatically to accommodate their intentions. With the change of intention and stroke, Modern Art was created. When Seurat explored his theories of color, his strokes changed to accommodate his intention.

Contemporary art was created by a freer use of strokes. Just about anything can now be a stroke. When Pop and Conceptual artists use words (letters) or numbers or symbols (such as Pi or screen-printed Campbell's Soup cans) to depict their meaning, strokes became symbolic, too, evoking ideas and images in the viewer's mind. Strokes became things, images themselves as buttons, pills, butterflies, collage elements; even stuffed and embalmed animals became strokes – all-one-piece elements – in a work.

Post Conceptual Art uses symbol-strokes that may or be not seen (the meaning is intrinsic in the stroke) to create a narrative image that may or may not be obviously relevant to the image. The focus is fully on each stroke, which symbolically reveals the intrinsic, underling reality of the physical universe (narrative image) depicted in the imagery.

Actually, that strokes can be symbols is not new. It is a feature in Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, and some of the works of the Muslim world and Jewish micrography. These stroke-letters are meant to be read as their meaning is important, even paramount in a work, just as they are in Word Art.

But, do the symbol-strokes need to be read? What if symbol strokes are used as strokes have been throughout much of the history of art, to create an image? Symbol- strokes that are painted over, glazed over, intertwined and all in a jumble are just as authentically symbol-strokes as those that can be easily read. Wouldn't the meaning of the meaning of the symbols, hidden within the work be intrinsic to the meaning of the work, the artist's intent?

What symbols to use? One could paint with any set or set of symbol-strokes from languages, both alphabetical and pictograph, mathematical, scientific or one could even invent one's own set. Especially, what symbols to use to focus on the supreme relevance of the strokes themselves in creating an artwork?

Since an artist conveys a reality of some sort, the corollaries in both elementary physics' theory and many theologies, most notably that of the Abrahamic religions seem to indicate a unique symbol set most applicable to depicting the intrinsic but "hidden" reality that create our physical universe.

In current physics' theory, the essential pre-particles and/or energies in the physical universe are wave-like motions known as strings or membranes. This theory is called string theory or M theory fairly synonymously. It is also posited that these pre-particles of energy were created at the Big Bang. Thus the matter of our physical universe and of all alternate universes is comprised of combinations of these branes. This is cutting edge science.

As reported in numerous publications and the media, including *Discover* and PBS's *Nova*, scientists have reached a basic consensus that there are 11 of these branes in our universe while their 11 opposites exist in other alternate universes.

Basic theology held by *all* branches and denominations of Christians and Jews, and also held by Muslims (it is in the *Koran*), asserts that when the Lord speaks in *Genesis* Chapter 1, the words of the Creator, spoken in Hebrew (all the Abrahamic faiths fully agree it was Hebrew) create the universe. This same agreed upon theology also holds that the Hebrew letters thus symbolize the most intrinsic, necessary and fundamental elements that make up our universe. According to that theology, we are always surrounded by the letters that form the Words of the Creator. Without them there would be no physical universe. This is ancient theology.⁵

There have always been 22 basic Hebrew letters.⁶

Hebrew has a long history of symbolism. The Hebrew letters are also used to represent numbers and thus they indicate value.⁷ The letters themselves are considered to have attributes and intrinsic meanings. In a way, like a Chinese pictogram word, when Hebrew letters are combined to form a word that word has greater symbolism based on its letters. Also, importantly, Hebrew is a phonic language, which gives each letter an associated sound vibration.¹

Hebrew Torah Font letters are all binary as they can be composed of combinations of two letters, the yud, which looks like a sort of floating comma and the vav, which resembles an upright spear. Both of these letters are written with one stroke, the vav being about twice as large as the yud. After extensive research it appears that the Torah Font is the only phonic binary symbol set in the world.

In English to create a capital “H” letter one must make three straight line strokes, none of which has any symbolic significance. Using Hebrew Torah font means that every stroke is indeed a symbol-letter (a yud or a vav) even if the stroke is combined with another stroke or two to create another Hebrew letter.

Additionally, the artist-author has discovered that every Torah font letter can be written with only one or two brush strokes, but these strokes may or may not be yuds and vavs. This further encourages the use of these symbols as artistic symbol-strokes. They are relevant symbols for scientific and mathematical purposes plus they are simultaneously binary and ten digit numerical systems.²

A painting or drawing created using symbol-strokes of Hebrew letters taken from original³ *Bible* texts may end up having secular or even totally abstract imagery content, since the scientific theoretical meaning and religious theological significance is intrinsic in the strokes, not the narrative. Thus original *Bible* texts (in Hebrew Torah font) can be selected and used as the symbol-strokes, which congregate to convey images such as a landscape, wildlife, portrait, etc.

Theologically, for all the Abrahamic religions and others too, the Words of the Creator are the energy and foundational pre-matter that are everywhere always. Likewise, scientifically, the physical universe is always composed of the energy and/or pre-particles that continuously combine until we are able to perceive them. The Post Conceptual focus on the usually hidden or obscured symbol-stroke is the visual representation of the current theoretical scientific and/or theological basis of the physical universe.

The Post Conceptual emphasis on creating the stroke, which can only occur in the immediacy of the *now*, additionally makes this theory a process centered form of art. The focus is not the whole of the image, but upon the one simple immediate stroke, with its intrinsic meaning and value. One cannot create or see a stroke in the past or

future, although one can remember or imagine doing so in the immediate now. All art can only actually be viewed in the *now*.⁴

Symbol-strokes can be tiny, easily hidden to create detail and artistically continue to symbolize those amazingly tiny branes. Tiny strokes also symbolize the immediacy of the infinite nanosecond of the now, which is pregnant with meaning and possibilities and even memories that the viewer brings into it.

Focusing on the strokes, a process oriented with immediate now consciousness and intent, expands the symbolic references of this new art theory which includes a wider theology, including Buddhists and Hindus and basic physics. Binary (duality) spiritual concepts are always inherently referenced, such as good-evil, holy-profane and yin-yang. Combining the strokes and/or overlapping them in the texts as words, evokes the combinations of the pre-particles that combine into particles, atoms, and so on, which links elementary physics to chemistry to biology, etc.

From the perspective of the history of art, Post Conceptual Art is a radical new theory of creating art that flips age old understanding around and asserts that the narrative exists to serve the strokes. Although the strokes may peek out here and there and are evident, the texts are obscured by the layers and glazes of symbol-strokes -- the artwork's meaning is intrinsic in the symbol-strokes, both those revealed and those obscured, just as energy is intrinsic but not necessarily apparent in matter.

The radical theory that the narrative imagery exists to serve the strokes leads to an additional transformation of how art can be classified. Until now, art has been categorized as religious or secular based upon the imagery of the work. So, Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* is secular, while his *Last Supper* is religious. This is the first time that a work of art can be categorized as religious based upon the text of its strokes, even if the narrative is fully secular (example: when the original letters from the texts of *Genesis* 1-2:7 and *Deuteronomy* 4:6 combine to form a Hamptons⁵ landscape). The meaning of a work is intrinsic in its symbol-strokes.

Likewise, works created with these binary and numerical symbol-strokes are also scientifically based, whether the narrative imagery of a work is religious or secular, the strokes are always meant to also symbolize the smallest pre-particles and binary science. So, at the same time a work of art can be categorized as secular, religious and science-based, springing from the new focus and understanding of its symbol-strokes.

As religious art, Post Conceptual UnGraven Image Art is the first actual religious art theory founded in the USA.⁶ Especially American in original theological outlook, it celebrates freedom of religion and tolerance, focusing upon a theology the Abrahamic religions all actually fully agree upon, plus additional points of agreement and understandings that Taoists, Buddhists, Hindus and others also hold true. Ironically,

using the symbol strokes to represent elementary particle physics' branes means the work is accessible to all on a secular level. We can share a vision.⁷

Like Word Art, calligraphy and micrography, every Post Conceptual work of art is comprised of letters, numbers or some set of written symbol-strokes. As such, these works all adhere to the biblical commandment not to make a graven image.

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March, 2007, revised April & August 2008

Southampton, NY

Footnotes

¹ Refers to *Fountain* a 1917 work of art by Marcel Duchamp, a found urinal that he signed “R. Mutt”.

² Art can be defined as a consciously created work that has no function other than to be itself. If this were not so, reviewers could not give bad reviews or good ones either. When a work changes the way a viewer sees the world the viewer embraces it as good and/or fine art. When a work changes the way many viewers see the world it becomes recognized as great art. This seems to apply to all the disciplines of art, visual, theater, dance, music, literature etc.

³ The entire image of a regular photograph happens all at the same time, across the whole work equally, and this all at the same time creation of a work continues from the taking of it through the development process.

⁴ Digital photography and some printmaking using photography sometimes combine the all-at-the same-time construction of photography with strokes made individually. Andy Warhol’s silkscreen portraits are an example of this. When through manipulation in a program such as Photoshop, or being combined with handmade strokes, what we classify as photography due to the development process is actually more related to stroke based art. The digital Giclee process of printing, now popular in fine art photography mirrors stroke art. Pure photography, whether digital or film has basically usurped painting’s job of visually bringing the news of events and people to us. While we visualize the founding fathers based on their painted portraits, we recall modern presidents based on photographic images.

⁵ That the Hebrew letters spoke by the Creator in *Genesis* are the essential building blocks of the physical universe is found in the *Torah*, *Talmud*, and both Jewish and Christian versions of the *Kabbalah*. It is fully held by each and every Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical branch, and denomination, and by all the branches of Judaism. It is written in the Koran.

⁶ Four of the Hebrew letters have special endings, called final letters, so in sometimes they are counted as separate letters. A final letter is sort of like a capital letter in English, only it appears at the end of a word and only when a word ends with one of four specific letters. However, the final letters are really just the same letter in another form, same phonetic sound, and meaning, so it is generally agreed that there are 22 Hebrew letters.

⁷ Thus a painting created solely of strokes that form Hebrew letters could be considered to have a numerical value based upon the sum total of all the values of its letter-strokes. This is interesting to consider as it again places such a work in the realm of physics and mathematics.

⁸ Hebrew is the only dead language that has ever been successfully revived and spoken again, as a primary daily language by people. At the end of WWII most Jews spoke Yiddish and/or the language of their country. Only scholars, including Christian scholars could speak Hebrew, much the way only scholars can use Latin today.

⁹ Taoism is a binary system of understandings. Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions incorporate duality also, such as yin yang, good-evil, holy profane, etc.

¹⁰ By *original* the author means: not translated. The texts used are standard, accepted as the original text by religious authorities and scholars, both Christian and Jewish.

¹¹ The emphasis on the *now* is again related to concepts found in many of the world’s great religions. The incredible biblical statement that refers best to the immediacy of the now and is the name that the Creator gives himself speaking to Moses: *I AM*.

¹² It is interesting to note that this new theory of art was born in Southampton, NY since this town was originally founded for the sake of religious freedom in 1640.

¹³ The other possible American religious movements are the Shakers (craft) and the Hudson River School, which dealt with the spirituality of nature.

Notes

“The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance”— Aristotle

“It is not the language of painters but the language of nature which one should listen to, the feeling for the things themselves, for reality, is more important than the feeling for pictures.” — Vincent Willem van Gogh

“When I have a terrible need of... shall I say the word... religion. Then I go out and paint the stars.” — Vincent Willem van Gogh

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