Beyond the Mind’s Eye

by

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Introduction

Fukakai – it means inexplicable, incomprehensible, mysterious, inexorable and it is an important part in my artmaking practice whichever type of work I create. My artwork is meant to bring people closer to something beyond the mind’s eye.

I would like to describe this by citing Walter Pater:

We are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve: we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least among “the children of this world,” in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion – that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments’ sake.

One does not need to be a painter or have a degree in painting to have the ability to stand in front of a painting and be deeply moved by it. Moved to the point that the heart trembles, the eyes shed a tear and the world around disappears for a moment. Everyone can connect to the inner sense of feeling art or feeling through art. For some it is easier and for some – harder but it is possible. My goal is to make this connection happen; I strive to create a transformative experience for the viewer that impacts multiple senses. Not for the sake of me but to offer that bit of something more in this limited time we have in this world.
I have conducted my research in several steps. First, it was necessary to understand how the viewer could be triggered to feel when experiencing the artwork. Thus, I looked at the concept of empathy in relation to the Simulation Theory and the Theory of Mind, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, the concept of denial and the limits of perception. After that I examined my own art practice to see where my artwork could connect with the viewer. My work essentially consists of and is influenced by three main elements – nature, colour and light. Nature in all its forms has been a part of my life since I was a child. It has had a tremendous influence on how I sense the world and express myself. The same can be said of colour. Being naturally sensitive to all visual information and coming from a family where creativity has always been used in one way or another, I have eventually included colours everywhere - in my artwork, in my hair, in my clothes, in things around me and so on. Light comes into play as an element that enhances or calms down the colour saturation and brightness, and also, brings out contrasts. It helps to emphasize the forms, textures and shapes, the dramatism and the atmosphere.

The elements of nature, colour and light in my work are joined in colourful, small to large scale (depending on the medium and technique) abstract prints, paintings, handmade paper sheets, handmade paper lamps, digital photographs and artist’s books. To make the work, I use Western, Asian and handmade paper, canvas, acrylic ink and oil paints, natural found objects as well as thread. The techniques employed include mainly monotype and screen-printing methods, papermaking, three-dimensional object construction and hand stitching. In order for the viewer to find a connection or a moment beyond the material world when looking at my work there is one more missing element – openness or, in other words, the right kind of perception. Therefore, my research includes a look at altered states of consciousness and how those are achieved, belief systems, places where people experience altered reality, hypnosis and individual practices such as meditation and prayers.
The Beginnings. Nature

To describe how profoundly important nature has been in forming me as a person and as an artist I need to go back to the beginning of myself as a human in this world.

I was born in a country that at the time formed a part of the Soviet Union. It meant that all foreign influences and any technical or other developments related to countries outside of the Soviet Union were rejected and forbidden by the authorities. My family was poor. I did not have many things that other children had. My upbringing happened under the influence of my great grandmother and grandmother who were both intelligent teachers and book lovers, both loved classical music, good manners, spoke several languages and had experienced hard childhood and wars. They taught me values that were important to people in their generations. My mother was a singer and travelled a lot. My father was like a free roaming cat – he came and went as he pleased. I had a lot of time to spend alone. We lived in a small village by the sea near the forest. There was no television or radio, no shops and just a couple other children. My dog was my best friend and nature became my second home.

In nature I experienced all four seasons and what they had to offer. I used to climb up the trees, sit there for a long time and sing my own songs. I felt the energy of trees and that I am connected to everything around me. I went to the sea to breathe the air that smelled like salt and algae and it made me calm and took all stress away. I went to pick mushrooms in the forest just like my grandfather and soon I knew every type of mushroom and what it was for. I went so often to the forest trails that one could put me there in the middle of the night and I would know which direction to go.

I spent my childhood going to the beach every day, observing the sun, the storms and listening to the sounds of waves and seagulls. I felt the texture of sand and watched how it falls through fingers in a perfect flow. I went swimming in huge waves, played in the snow,
ran around on my own and explored the hills and valleys and all the amazing creatures living around me.

I felt unexplainable energy in everything and I could see auras in changing colours. I made my own rituals to connect with nature. I felt nature was sacred and found strength in it.

When I was an adolescent, I began taking photographs of nature and painting landscapes, flowers, the sea, shells and stones. I took thousands of photographs of sunsets and I still continue this practice. I notice colours, contrasts, small details, for example, butterfly wings, sand particles and how they are in different colours, how the wind has a different smell every season, how amazing and complicated the tree bark is.

When I have a chance to go to the beach I still say a prayer of gratitude to the sun and the sea. I would immerse my hands in the sea water to cleanse myself and take a little shell or a piece of driftwood back home with me.

These experiences influenced and are always affecting the artwork that I create. From realistic and representational art I have gradually turned to more abstraction, emphasizing colours, angles, shapes, and contrasts. But nature is an indispensable part of it.

**Context. Colour and Light**

Similar to forms, shapes and textures that are derived from nature, my leaning towards using colours in my works is longstanding. I have been influenced by colour from an early age and my inspiration of its use derives from the use of colours in cultures and traditions. One of my areas of focus is the exploration of colour relationships, balance and contrast, and how that can affect the artwork. Colour impacts not just the print, photograph or painting itself. For me, it contextually affects the way we look at something. Whether it is the colour of ambient light in the room or the colour someone wears, the same impact applies to the use of colours in and around my works.
For example, in Hinduism and Vaishnavism each day of the week is associated with specific colours that a person should wear to pacify the planets that rule the days. It is a part of the Vedic astrology which is also understood as the science of light (Gernady). It is therefore important to understand that colour is not merely a literal outward expression or a simplistic connection but it signifies a deeper spiritual connection that transcends the visual impact. It provides the context and backdrop to enhance the visual combined with the essence of the spiritual.

Josef Albers’ *Interaction of Color* has explored phenomena such as colour recollection and visual memory from a different perspective. His work approaches colour from the perspective of practical experimentation with relativity of colour, transparency and space-illusion, temperature and humidity and the afterimage effect. Albers proved that a colour is relative. It has many facets. One colour, for example, can be made to appear as two different tones. A background colour can make the foreground look darker or lighter, cooler or warmer. It adds visionary depth of contrast and these variations influence how colour is viewed by our own eyes. Each person sees the same exact colour differently.

If one knows how to use colours, that is very powerful knowledge and is especially useful for artists. Besides my natural affinity for colours this is a part of the reason why I have been using colours in my artwork and life in general.

Colours remind me of my childhood when everything seemed brighter and clearer. Sometimes they hit me as an arrow of pain reminding of some experienced trauma. Other times they float around singing about dreams and wishes for the future. Since I first began to research artists many years ago, I was drawn to the works of Mark Rothko, Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse and David Hockney specifically because of how they used colours in their works.
Besides nature and colour the third main element in my work is light. Light has always been something that I used unintentionally – as highlights and shadow in my prints, photographs or paintings. After beginning to make three-dimensional works such as a coloured and printed textile hung from the ceiling, prints on transparent coloured vellum and reflective cut out poster board hung in front of each other from a rack as well as glass containers filled with prints wrapped around paper pulp balls, I realized that the importance of light is much greater than I previously thought.

When light impacts human beings on a biological level, it can improve or disrupt sleep, cognition and wellbeing in general. It can improve the mood and stabilize circadian rhythms. It has been proved that psychologically, light decreases depression and increases cognitive performance such as reaction time and activation. Brighter light intensifies emotions, while low light keeps them steady. More saturated hues can have amplifying effects on emotions, while muted colours can dampen emotions. Natural light can make you happier, but colours created by artificial light can also evoke different emotions and have other effects on the body. The direction of a light source can transform spaces and impact the way people feel in these spaces (The Psychological Impact of Light and Color).

In the history of art, there have been a number of artists who have experimented with light. An art movement which is closely related to my present work and research is the Light and Space art.

The Light and Space movement was in its essence Minimalist art in West Coast America in the 1960s and 1970s. Its main focus was on geometric shapes and use of light in order to affect the environment and perception of the viewer. It is believed that the movement came to exist because of the radiant light and tempered atmosphere in Los Angeles (Light and Space Movement).
Besides Minimalism that had the quality of stripping down the object the Light and Space art is also related to Finish/Fetish which used plastics with glossy finishes and highly polished surfaces. The Light and Space movement was characterized by industrial materials and a hard-edge, geometric aesthetic included in artworks that were created as singular objects (Light and Space).

The term “Light and Space” appeared in 1971 after an exhibition *Transparency, Reflection, Light, Space: Four Artists* at the UCLA University Art Gallery. Peter Alexander, Larry Bell, Robert Irwin and Craig Kauffman presented works in which the experience was emphasized over the object. The artists were united in their embrace of psychology and technology that were used to explore materiality and human perception (Light and Space).

Artists of the Light and Space movement used alternative materials to create two- and three-dimensional works of art. The works were made of materials such as glass and plastic as well as polyester resins, cast acrylic, neon and argon lights (Light and Space).

The Light and Space art is ethereal and atmospheric but also geometric and analytic. It requires active, and often multi-sensory, participation from the viewer. There is no single defining aesthetic but instead a preoccupation with the viewer’s perception and participation. A very important concept in the movement is the sublime. It is related to the German philosopher Emmanuel Kant’s description of the sublime that resides in a formless object when limitlessness is represented in it. The event should be permeated with feelings of timelessness, overwhelming and transcendental. The sublimity here does not manifest itself in the object or the space but in the phenomenon of light itself (Light and Space).

The artwork that I make has the same goal as the Light and Space art – to create multi-sensory, immersive experience, a moment out of time, a feeling that takes over. The difference is that a part of my work includes modern technologies (creation of specific light and sound atmosphere in the space) but another part is related to nature and the handmade
aspect (the objects that are placed in the space are made of natural materials and hand crafted by me).

The most important artistic influence in creation of my work I have found in James Turrell. Turrell spread the Light and Space movement worldwide. He innovated photographic techniques to allow light to have a physical presence. Holography made the light itself the subject rather than the medium. In Turrell’s installations, shapes such as planes, cubes, pyramids, and tunnels take up space as coloured light (James Turrell).

About his work James Turrell has said, “My desire is to set up a situation to which I take you and let you see. It becomes your experience” (About). I could not agree more.

**Empathy and the Closed Mind**

As mentioned in the Introduction, in order to provide the viewer with a specific experience it is necessary to find what can trigger the inner self to feel. And here the concept of empathy comes into play. Empathy is known as the ability to understand what another human being thinks or feels.

Empathy has been related to many fields of study, but recently it has experienced a comeback with the advent of social neuroscience. Social neuroscience melds social psychology and cognitive neuroscience. As a branch of science social psychology deals with social interactions, including their origins and their effects on the individual. Cognitive neuroscience is concerned with the study of the biological processes and aspects that underlie cognition, with a focus on the neural connections in the brain which are involved in mental processes (Lopez).

There does not seem to be a definitive consensus on how we empathize with others but there are two main theories which try to explain this phenomenon:

1) Simulation Theory suggests that empathy is possible because when we see another person’s emotion, we represent that emotion in ourselves so we can know what it feels like.
This process is related to mirror neurons and processes in the brain where overlap of activation for both self-focused and other-focused thoughts and judgments happens;

2) Theory of Mind proposes that we are able to understand what another person thinks and feels based on the rules for how one should think and feel (Lopez).

Ellen Winner talks about three kinds of empathy: (1) Cognitive empathy – knowing what someone feels. This is an important social skill and the easiest one to measure; (2) Emotional empathy – feeling what someone feels. It happens when one vicariously mirrors another person’s internal state; (3) Compassionate empathy – engaging in altruistic behaviour or having sympathy for another person. Empathic abilities of people are different.

A related concept is caring. Terry Barrett talks about six different types of caring: 1) caring for self; 2) caring in the inner circle; 3) caring for strangers and distant others; 4) caring for animals, plants and the Earth; 5) caring for the human made world; 6) caring for ideas. Yet another concept is compassion. Barrett suggests that compassion can be felt when one knows about who or what one is in empathy with (White and Constantino 31).

In relation to art, empathy brings up a variety of questions because it is not a straightforward concept. It is interlinked with such notions as communication, ethics and knowledge.

According to Jill Bennett, the question that one can ask about an artwork is – how does it put insides and outsides into contact in order to establish a basis for empathy?

Donald Blumenfeld-Jones in *Aesthetics, Empathy and Education* argues that there are moments which mark us forever, and change us if we are available. He calls these moments ethical encounters, and artist practices may prepare us for them. Blumenfeld-Jones states that it is not art by itself but a certain disposition toward art that provides a possibility for living an ethical life (White and Constantino).
The writings of Matteo Marangoni and Alfred Margulies made me ask the questions such as - do we need to know more to be able to understand art? Do we need to know in order to empathize with what we see? How can one understand the inner experience of another?

After establishing what empathy is, it is necessary to review this concept in its historical context. Empathy as a phenomenon has been studied since the 20th century. There are two introspective methods of investigation – phenomenology and psychoanalysis. Phenomenology was established by Edmund Husserl and is a branch of philosophy that studies man’s consciously reported experiences. Psychoanalysis was founded by Sigmund Freud and is a system of psychological theories and therapeutic techniques which aim to treat mental health disorders by investigating how the conscious and the unconscious elements of the mind interact with each other (Margulies).

In 1921, Freud stated that empathy plays the largest part of one’s understanding of what is essentially foreign to one’s ego. Presumption of empathy enables us to take up an attitude towards another mental life. However, Freud’s opinion was that this process was neglected and unsolved in theory. The reason for that was that many clinicians took empathy as a given. In later years the importance of empathy was rediscovered. In 1977, Heinz Kohut, an Austrian-American psychoanalyst who developed a school of self psychology, considered that the idea of an inner life of a man and thus of a psychology of complex mental states is impossible without the ability to know the definition of empathy (Margulies).

What is important to note about phenomenology in relation to psychoanalysis is that Husserl’s method of phenomenological reduction can be compared to Freud’s rule of free association – both techniques prepare an individual to put aside biases to observation. Nevertheless, the ideal of phenomenology was to return to the raw data of experience. In phenomenological reduction the phenomenologist uses an unbiased approach – the
phenomenon is observed as it manifests itself. The observer does not make any judgments of value about the phenomenon or any affirmations about its causes (Margulies).

Freud studied the inner borders of the mind – the relationship between consciousness and unconsciousness while Husserl focused more on the relationship between consciousness and the senses. Where Freud talked about defence mechanisms, Husserl mentioned biases. Both thinkers established that humans refuse to experience the world or themselves. The limits of perception are related to denial. Denial happens in cases of external threatening or painful facts that an individual refuses to acknowledge (Margulies). For example, we cannot accept a thought about our own obliteration so we spend a part of our lives denying the inevitability of death.

Denial is not only individual but also collective. It can be inherent in culture or common existence. In relation to denial we can talk about non-emotional perceiving. This happens when one’s perceptual apparatus becomes enslaved through past experience and knowing. It is because once we learn how something is supposed to be, we experience it differently. As a result our perception of reality gets permanently distorted (Margulies).

Artists have been aware of the limits of perception. For example, Pablo Picasso claimed that it took him several years to learn to draw like Raphael but then the rest of his life to learn to draw like a child (Margulies). Children have not experienced life therefore knowing does not change their perception. They see reality without distortion.

So if an artist knows that the audience may be biased and non-receptive, what kind of art could he or she create in order to be understood or – in order for the artwork to be interpreted exactly the way the artist has envisaged it?

**Search for the Meaning**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, denial and limits of perception can create severe obstacles in one’s ability to see – not to see with eyes but to see with the inner self, the soul,
the true self. In my life, I have gone through the same process of growing up, experiencing things, losing my dear ones, being afraid and developing a sense of my limits as everyone else.

When I was just a few years old and had never seen or heard of anyone who died, I had a moment of clarity and terrible fear. I told my grandmother I did not want to die. I did not know what death was but I knew. Since then death has always been with me and everything I did was to try to get away from these repeating moments of blackness and a hole of nothing (there is no other word for it) overcoming me. Around the age of twelve I had the next revelation – I wanted to know the real truth of things. The truth of the truth. Not the truth of how the daily life goes on but the truth behind all. I knew that nothing else would ever be sufficient but the truth.

I grew up as an only child and connected to nature in my own way. I talked to trees and felt unexplainable energy in everything. Sometimes I felt it through fingers and sometimes it was a colourful aura that appeared around objects and people. I forgot all about it until, many years later, I walked a full circle to come back to the beginning: the colours, the felt sensations and the inexplicable. The big questions of what this existence is all about and what else there is.

This has become even more acute since my personal realization that the world is increasingly becoming a place of materialism, endless politics and greed. Structures and rules that everyone follows but no one can really explain why in a way that makes sense, ignorance, violence, fake smiles and fake caring because you are supposed to and not because you actually care. I strive to make art that offers something else – a personal connection to something higher, experience that is not written in guidelines: the ineffable. I am not fighting against the world with screams, guns and revolution. I want to open up what has been
forgotten – a look into oneself, a conversation without words that changes one forever. And I know it is possible because I have experienced it myself.

The neuropsychologist Marc Wittmann has stated that during extraordinary moments of consciousness our senses of time and self are altered. We may feel time and self dissolving. The relationship between the consciousness of time and the consciousness of self is close. Consciousness of the self and time is built by the brain. This relates to the ancient text of Yoga Vasistha which declares that the universe does not exist and that the world is created by the human mind (Venkatesananda). After studying this text, I have come to the conclusion that the mind is the main creator of everything. We are what we think we are. And we create ourselves in our mind’s idea about what we should be, do, achieve, how we should act and so on. Our mind tells us what reality is and that is why it is exactly what it is – we choose it. We can choose this or make a decision and choose something else. In any case, the path is our choice. For many, this choice becomes impossible because of the limited mind and the inability to be aware and open. That is why one can turn to techniques and practices to change the perception.

For example, the author Carlos Castaneda has written about his experiences with Mescalito, a teaching spirit, under the tutelage of Don Juan who was a Yaqui or a Man of Knowledge. Castaneda experienced an altered state of consciousness and during that time he perceived the reality as unknown. Don Juan attempted to get Castaneda to see – to perceive energy directly as it flows through the universe.

In addition, Dr. Michael Newton in hypnotherapy sessions recorded his clients remembering their time in the spirit world between physical deaths. After the sessions the clients felt very different about their life in this world. They had acquired knowledge that let them have a sense of purpose, release fear and uncertainty and see the whole experience of existence as one continuous flow.
Turning once more to Yoga Vasistha, this text describes the human desire for liberation, asserts that liberation comes through a spiritual life and emphasizes free will and human creative power. It also discusses meditation and its powers in liberating the individual (Venkatesananda).

These texts, although varied, all point to altered states of consciousness in which one perceives reality differently. An altered state of consciousness can be induced by a variety of methods but in all cases it produces shared cognitive and behavioural effects, for example, hallucinations, out-of-body experiences, ego dissolution, enhanced imagery and a distorted sense of time. These effects are not coincidental. There is evidence that during altered states of consciousness the attention is directed internally and there is attenuated interaction with the external environment (Tabatabaeian and Jennings).

My research into empathy, perception and states of consciousness is linked to the fact that the viewer’s experience is the most important aspect in creation of my work. I need to determine how to reach the desired effect – the offer of experience that connects the material with the immaterial and takes the viewer’s mind away for a moment. In order to create the connection I consult literature about ambient music, sound and acoustics, art movements such as Impressionism, Abstract Empressionism, Fauvism, Futurism, Colour field painting, Orphism and Psychedelic art, psychology, hallucinations and simulation, metaphysics, faith, spirituality and astronomy.

I read about religions of the world and how each religion is different from the other and why people believe. I look at alternative views expressed in materials about esoterica, astrology, meditation, use of different techniques to alter the way one perceives reality. I look for my own truth in all of it. I visit churches to feel the atmosphere and pray. I use different prayers irrespective of the religion. I observe people in their prayers and rituals and repeat these rituals. I talk to priests and individuals who belong to different religions to understand aspects
of their belief. Churches are spaces considered sacred. Prayers are tools to bring one’s mind away from the daily life and reflect on it. They also serve as a way of connecting to the immaterial higher entity that has different names across the world. I am interested in these places and practices as my goal is to make the viewers feel like entering a sacred space and having a moment of revelation when they enter and spend time at my exhibition. My decisions about the light, colours, sounds and materials are directly influenced by this goal. I explore the use of aroma therapy, Zen meditation, mindful breathing, the Mahā Mantra and the sounds of Koshi wind chimes, Tibetan singing bowls and gongs. I have been exposed to antidepressants, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol and psyllobicin, have made detailed notes on my experience with these and talked to other individuals about their experience and opinion. I have spent countless hours looking at the sea, rain, fire and stars. These experiences and practices are informing my choices about the exhibition elements as I am seeking to create an alternative way to experience a state of altered consciousness without specific meditation, movement or exposure to substances on the part of the viewer. As a part of my research process I also write a diary about specific instances in which something seemed or felt different – déjà vu, feeling a flow of energy, intuition that came true, visions, meeting someone that seemed known, visiting a place where I had never been before but I recognized it, dreams, being able to see auras and etheric bodies. I am looking for a portal through which the connection can happen and how to create it for my viewers. Something so deeply moving that it cracks the layers of self-protection and denial and lets one just be and feel. A moment of immortality.

On a practical level, my research revolves around three dimensional installation art that includes custom made interior space, handmade prints, light, colour, sound and movement. These elements create an immersive experience for the viewer and lead to a moment of revelation that lets one forget about the worldly life.
Creation of such an installation requires research in several stages or parallel processes:

1) **Interior space design.** To create the space for housing my prints, I went through an intensive sketching process. I looked at different installation types, consulted magazines, books, articles and Internet sites. After sketching I discussed the work with advisors. I value input from a wide variety of individuals – friends and family members, mentors, professors, fellow students, specialists in the areas of interior design, music, lighting etc. We looked at the positive and negative sides of each design. This process continued until one final sketch was chosen and elaborated on. I made a technical plan with all dimensions included, a list of materials, a colour scheme, a plan for the size and scope of artwork and a downsized three-dimensional model. A part of the work was done through drawing, another part in a computer software program and finally the model was handmade, experimented with and photographed for future reference.

2) **Material for artwork.** As much as possible I try to stay away from ready-mades and already known forms. Therefore my material is handmade paper, found natural objects and nature friendly objects. In order to create the necessary pieces for the installation, I beat different types of paper pulp (abaca, hemp, flax) and made numerous sheets of paper in different sizes. I coloured the paper pulp, used pulp painting and added a variety of materials into the paper such as kozo strings, cotton strings, dried leaves, grass, herbs and spices. I read articles about hand papermaking and different ways of making sheets, colouring, drying, layering and other aspects. When the sheets had dried I used the large ones to print on them and the small ones to dampen and wrap around handmade three dimensional grids made of bamboo. I put some small paper pieces in front of a computer screen showing moving images or videos of fire, water, wind blowing leaves or sand, clouds moving across the sky and similar. This part of the work was related to my search for a re-connection between the viewer and nature through art. The handmade paper is a part of nature – its original source.
material comes from nature and gets transformed into something that humans have used for centuries as part of their civilized life. A projection of natural phenomena and objects on paper offers a chance for anyone to connect to a deep-rooted feeling: an ancestral instinct of where the humans have their real home and source of knowledge about the world. I took photographs and made slow motion videos of the paper in front of the screen. I also went to the dark room and looked at the paper in different coloured light. I looked at light installation art and decided on my own version of what paper objects should be shown in the custom made space together with my chosen light and videos. I choose handmade paper as a contrast to the factory made. The process of making my own sheets emphasizes the importance of coming back to nature and ourselves. The installation was something I participated in with my own physical self, not just my mind. I have immersed my hands in the pulp and formed the paper. In that way, my energy was transferred to my viewers.

3) Prints. Although I am a printmaker I did not treat my prints as the main object of focus for the installation. Experience itself was the most important element. The prints had to have the exact design, size and proportion to complement and harmonize the other installation elements. To reach the desired effect, I made purely abstract images, loosely based on natural forms. For example, I looked at tree branches and how they intertwined in the air. Then I photographed what I saw, made sketches or memorized the image depending on what was available to me at that time. Later I continued the image making process digitally or on paper – I drew the lines, angles and choose proportions. I used the sketches to make images with ink on acrylic sheets and then printed them on paper as additive monotype. I also chose to cut the images in pieces of polyester film to make stencils and put them on paper for stencil monotype. The work process was completely intuitive, and I did not work on the prints on a regular basis. The ideas were constantly circulating in my mind. As soon as I felt that an idea was fully formed, I began working and did not look at the time until I had
finished everything. All materials and tools such as paper, inks, brushes, plates and similar I prepared in advance so that I could work whenever the time was right.

4) Videos. My video recordings started with countless photographs of sunsets. I always look at a sunset as if it is the first and the last sunset of my life. In contrast to photographs I made videos that included movement such as: moving trees, wind blowing sand particles, dry bent grass creaking, waterfalls, tides coming in and birds flying. I also made videos of videos. These recordings formed a part of my memory of places and nature. I did not specifically research video art but I watched different documentaries about nature and the world. My videos contained natural scenes with little alteration, to remind viewers of things they have already seen and bring a sense of comfort.

5) Sound. I researched sounds that are natural. For example, ambient sounds that can be heard when walking on the beach, in the forest, wind across a field of tall grass. Also impactful sounds like that of a waterfall or when there is storm or it rains outside. Then there are all the wonderful semantic sounds, for example, when sitting by a crackling fire or perhaps the sound of birds singing or the splash of fish jumping out of water in a lake. Natural sounds may appear recognizable but are also mysterious and unexplainable just like the experience I was looking to create. I chose the combination of natural (such as water, fire, air) and composed (musical) sounds to include something that was random and rhythmic, unexpected and balanced at the same time. The recordings were made with the help of a microphone and a recording device and later edited for enhanced acoustic effects.

6) Colour and light. I have always been influenced by colour and my art practice began with painting and later photography which are mediums that allow the creation of very colourful images and an in-depth study of colour relations. I researched how colour and light affect perception and can change the way one feels about a place, a person, an activity and oneself. I mixed my own colours and created colour charts for digital sketches that I made by
using my photographs and different software programs for drawing, painting and image editing. These sketches were explorations in colour relations, colour contrasts, colour harmony, tonal gradations and proportions between fields of colours. I created a list of samples that could be used for the installation when planning projections of changing coloured light in the custom made space and on my handmade paper. I researched art movements, art installations and artists who work with colours and light in their creative practice such as James Turrell, Olafur Eliasson, Yayoi Kusama, Pipilotti Rist, Bill Viola, Douglas Wheeler, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer.

Exhibition

After determining that the effect I was looking to create could be fully realized in three dimensions and through offering multi-sensory experience to the viewer, I worked on designing and developing the following elements:

1) A 20’ x 20’ square – installation space on the theatre stage. The space had an 18-foot high ceiling, black velour walls, black masonite floor and an opening functioning as entrance and exit point in one of the walls. The theatre stage was chosen as it had the necessary size for the installation and the technical possibilities to add specific elements that would be hard or impossible to realize in other locations.

2) A twisted dark corridor (wheelchair accessible) with the same wall and floor materials as those for the main installation space leading from the corridor in the building to the installation. The twisted corridor served the function of raising the level of anticipation in the viewer when approaching the installation.

3) 4 handmade paper lamps (2 pyramid form – L 11” x W 11” x H 14”, 1 cube form – L 11” x W 11” x H 13”, 1 rectangle form – L 11 ½” x W 11 ½” x H 17 ½”) with bamboo frames and colour changing battery powered wireless BLS LED Puck lights inside that were placed on black painted plywood boxes in the dark twisted corridor and served the same
function as the corridor – to raise the level of anticipation and to offer a sneak peek of what is to come. The lamps were made of dried sheets of bleached coloured abaca, hemp and flax.

4) A 7 foot in diameter reflective water pool in the centre of the installation space. The pool was 15” high and had a 15” wide bench space around. The bench space was included in the 7’ diameter dimensions. The pool was fabricated of wood and the water in the pool was still. The pool served several functions – it was a place for rest, if the viewer did not want to stand, it allowed the viewer to touch the water and experience this kind of sensation on the skin, it reflected the main installation elements above the viewer’s head and served as the main point of interest on the floor also enhancing the effect of the ceiling. It was also a symbol of water as one of the four elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air) represented in the installation space in various ways to offer a connection between the human being and the essence of life on Earth.

5) Three speakers, placed in the installation space. One speaker emitted the sound of water and was placed on the floor. The other speaker emitted the sound of fire and was placed at the ear level. The third speaker emitted a composition that included thunder and wind sounds, music instruments (resonator bells, ocean drum, Moroccan Square Frame Drum, Meinl Helix Bowl Saragosa Line) and vocal. The voice was recorded inside a church for enhanced acoustics. This speaker was placed 12 foot high – at the level of the main installation element. The water sound symbolized the element of Water, the fire sound – the element of Fire, the musical composition symbolized the element of Air and the human life in this world – the human being as the indispensable part of nature. All sound recordings were 20 minutes long and were played in a continuous loop as the background sound that could be heard but was not overwhelming. The viewer could hear all recordings together or walk around the space and hear separate sounds. All sounds were intended to serve the function of releasing the mind from any stress or outside influence and letting the viewer have a moment
of timelessness and meditation, feeling and simply being with no pressures or requirements attached.

6) A 12 inch diameter handmade paper lamp with Feit Soft-White LED light bulb inside – hung in the centre of the space, 8 foot high, straight above the water pool. The lamp was connected to the ceiling with a cable that also served as the electricity provider. The lamp and the pool were two out of three main visual installation elements. The lamp could be looked at as the object of wonder – a symbol of the Universe, the Sun, the Eternity, the perfect geometric form, a point of focus in case of meditation. The lamp was made of bleached, coloured abaca pulp. The form was strengthened by the frame made of copper wire that was not visible from the outside.

7) The main and the largest installation element was the paper ceiling. It consisted of a square welded steel frame with the dimensions of 17’ x 17’, hung from the 18’ high ceiling at the height of 12’. The outer frame held a grid made of a fishing line. There were 9 irregular square handmade paper sheets placed (but not attached) on top of the frame next to each other in lines of 3. Each sheet was approximately 25-30 square feet in size. The sheets were made of bleached coloured abaca pulp. Each sheet had a different colour. The colours, their combinations and irregular form colour fields, spots and splashes on the paper were designed with the goal to make the ceiling represent very diverse colours and also to create an abstract screen that could be the main point of focus for meditation and observation of the changing coloured light. All paper in the installation had inclusions of dried flowers and leaves to emphasize a connection with nature and make the paper have more texture. The paper sheets forming the ceiling were printed in monotype technique (additive and stencil monotype) by using acrylic sheets and polyester film as matrices and acrylic ink. The prints showed abstract forms and lines to let the viewer use the paper as a source of free association. The paper itself symbolized the Earth, while the positioning of the paper sheets above the viewer’s head
symbolized the connection between the Earth and the Sky, the below and the above. Another reason for placing the paper above was to create an effect of wonder and a feeling that the viewer was experiencing something higher and greater (not in the literal sense), all encompassing, a shelter, a place above and beyond materiality, something that could be experienced with the soul but not touched with hands.

8) The final element was the coloured light that was projected at the paper ceiling from above and below in two ways – as a video showing nature scenes (20 minutes long and played as a continuous loop) and as changing coloured light in general. Some of the light was projected directly on the paper while some of it was used to create gobos. The order and speed of changing colours, their brightness and saturation were chosen to harmonize it with the rest of the installation. The goal was to offer perfect immersion in colour, to create an atmosphere for meditation, relaxation and feeling without thought, and to showcase the paper ceiling as an object that was both handmade and otherworldly at the same time.

My installation was meant for anyone and everyone – it was all inclusive. Any person was welcome to view it the way that was preferable for them – it could be a short visit of 5 minutes or a longer stay of 20 minutes or even an hour. The installation could be experienced with senses but also internally. It was up to the viewer to choose how deeply they wished to feel and sense what was offered. It was preferable that a person entered the space alone to become fully immersed and have no other distractions, but it was not required. Because of the way the installation was set up the images, thoughts or feelings that the viewer took with them after seeing it were unique and different for every person. I had no intention to create a political statement, a manifesto or a lesson to be learned. The work was essentially meant to lift the soul up to a higher level of vibration – whether it was a feeling of positivity or a sense of wonder or deep spiritual experience or simply a pleasure for the eyes – anything was possible and welcome.
I have done a lot of preparatory work and research in order to be able to replicate this installation in various locations, shapes and sizes in the future. I am interested in churches, gardens and gallery spaces as the main locations for my work but other places are not ruled out. The projection can be changed to multiple screens. The paper can have many sizes and shapes and be placed on the ceiling, walls or the floor. The installation space can have still or flowing water, natural grass and plants, park benches or stones to sit on. The sounds emitted in the space can be natural, composed, musical or unrecognizable. The coloured light can be shown on one wall, dispersed in the space, come from the floor, numerous paper lamps or neon lights that form shapes themselves. The possibilities are endless and exciting.

**Conclusion**

My art essentially consists of three main elements – nature, colour and light which show themselves in my latest work: a large scale three dimensional installation that includes handmade printed paper and paper objects, coloured light, a video projection, sound recordings and reflective water.

I strive for technical perfection, visual effect and communication with my viewer on a level that goes deeper than the material shell of things. Memory, experiences, research and practical experiments - all of this comes together to help me combine the traditional with the contemporary and create something new.

My research revolves around psychology and psychoanalysis, neuroscience, spirituality and metaphysics, hypnosis, hallucinations and simulation, religions of the world and reasons why people believe, altered states of consciousness and what creates those, meditation and ritual practices, churches as sacred spaces and prayers as tools to connect with the higher immaterial entity. I am seeking to create an alternative way to offer the experience of a state of altered consciousness without specific requirements for my viewers when they enter the installation space. I believe that all answers are within us, and our own bodies and minds are
perfectly calibrated to access this knowledge with the correct triggers. The goal is not to tell
the viewer what to feel but to open up the chance to feel.

Wassily Kandinsky wrote that colours have a psychic effect on humans by producing a
corresponding spiritual vibration. If the soul is a music instrument, the artist is the hand
which plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul.

According to Kandinsky, the abstract stands in opposition to the material world. The organic
form possesses an inner harmony and its inner note will always be heard. The spiritual accord
of the organic with the abstract element can strengthen the appeal as much as by contrast as
by similarity.

I think about the spiritual a lot when I carefully combine hand-made self-crafted paper with
printed imagery. To make the prints I start the process with photographs and sketches which
are later used to manipulate the printmaking matrices – mylar and plexi glass sheets.

Sometimes I work all through the night – as long as the creative energy flow lets me. I
become my art.

My soul is shining with the light of ten million colours. They freely live in all artwork that I
create - paper, prints, photographs and paintings. Sometimes they like to stick to the smooth
surface of paper in two dimensions only. Other times they stare provokingly from large
canvases or shimmering layered glass. I have found them lurking in paper pulp that I mix,
sneaking out when they befriend my embroidery threads, or suddenly splash on textile with
the help of fabric paints.

Art making for me is a meditative, healing and self-reflective process in which I aim to create
attractive, mysterious and harmonized forms that give a sense of the world beyond the
physical existence. There is the spiritual, the ineffable, the letting go, the diving in, the
transforming into, the flying away and the coming back to. This work was created with the
intent to offer a chance to go to a space outside of the bodily constraints, connect with the
divine and the sublime and then return to here and now. After this journey one may never be the same again.

**Bibliography (in alphabetical order)**


Images

Beyond the Mind’s Eye. Entrance
Beyond the Mind’s Eye. Entrance

Beyond the Mind’s Eye. Exit
Beyond the Mind’s Eye. Entrance/Exit corridor. Detail

Beyond the Mind’s Eye. Entrance/Exit corridor. Detail
Beyond the Mind’s Eye. Entrance/Exit corridor. Detail
Beyond the Mind’s Eye. Main room
Beyond the Mind’s Eye. Main room. Detail
Beyond the Mind’s Eye. Ceiling

Beyond the Mind’s Eye. Ceiling detail
Beyond the Mind’s Eye. Ceiling detail