

Order from Chaos
by
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About the series

My *Order From Chaos* series of paintings was born in my mind as I watched a flock of birds one afternoon. These birds flailed in all directions one moment, then landed in an organized row on a telephone wire the next, as if on cue from the wand of an unseen orchestrator.

The sight was not unfamiliar, but in this particular instance it seemed to carry a particular significance: order underlies chaos. A deep-seated, inherent core of order exists in our world, residing just beneath the thin veil of apparent random confusion. Order flashes before us in fleeting insights. With a slight refocus of perception or adjustment of mindset, the ordinary and the meaningless become exquisite, ordered, divine.

It was happenstance that my eye had landed on that group of birds, and that my mind was inclined at that instance to recognize a certain interpretation of that sight. With *Order From Chaos*, I undertook to deliberately create for others what happenstance had created for me, to purposely produce visual images that might alter and reorganize the onlooker's larger perspective.

I chose as my creative tools a computer, an electronic tablet with stylus, and graphics software. These tools offered possibilities for effects and impressions not feasible in any of the natural media I had previously employed. I reveled in the boggling domain of options before me, and the exhilarating degree of control to the level of a single pixel. And yet, these options and this increased control placed increased demands on me as an artist, demands for precision and clarity of intent. In the process of working and reworking each piece, I found myself paring and simplifying more often than elaborating, producing a final image that felt bare-boned and hard won.

Since the subject matter was rooted in the realm of emotions and spirit, I decided the images should be largely abstract. The most overriding characteristic we all share is a continual search for perspective and meaning. At its best, an abstract image has the power to communicate on an elemental level, to tap into this shared domain that is more authentic and essential to us than the objects of the physical world.

I considered the various ways in which we attempt to sort out the order beneath chaos. On a superficial level, we may try to structure or organize our environment, but this alone is rarely satisfying. Some of us look to a higher power, some to science. We also reach out to other humans for significance, or we assign human characteristics where none exist. And because the greater truth can seem overwhelming or incomprehensible, we

focus on microcosms, examining fragments in hopes that they will shed light on the whole.

In *Order From Chaos*, I employed distinct visual techniques to address each of these methods of searching and coping.

I used geometry as the basis for each composition, to represent fundamental order in our environment. Geometry carries a quality of unwavering dependability, and it has an immediate impact. As evidence, a single starkly geometrical sight, a line of birds on a horizontal wire, had inspired this entire series. Therefore, each of the compositions presents a strong structure, relying in particular on horizontal and vertical symmetry. This structure becomes an anchor as the eye moves across the surface, exploring subtle nuances and punctuating details. Ever in the visual periphery, it provides a constant tug in the ongoing push-and-pull between the big picture and the little picture, the overall and the detail, the calculated and the incidental.

To reference our quest for a higher power, I frequently employed a suggestion of backlighting from a single source of illumination, as shown in Plate 4. The effect is subtle, almost subliminal, just as this quest can seem elusive and ephemeral. A light source from within, more reliable and reassuring than one from without, puts us in intimate touch with the place inside us seeking the singular divine.

In our age, people look to science for explanations. I incorporated physics in *Order From Chaos* to speak to this fact, and also to establish intellectual credibility with the viewer. In the unreal world of these abstracts, the cause-and-effect laws of the real world still apply. Light reflects from one surface to another, moisture condenses, shadows are cast. For example in Plate 7, the drop of water catches light and bends it in a believable manner, distorting the shape it sits upon. In Plate 2, a tilted ovalesque object, semi-luminous and three-dimensional, bears a faint reflection of the face that sits beside it.

I frequently employed the human face as a means of resonating with the viewer's search for perspective. Of all the objects in the physical world, none other is more compelling and evocative to us. Large or small, distorted or natural, expressioned or in repose, a human face grabs our attention. Ancient peoples felt the need to put human faces on abstract entities such as Fate or Inspiration. Given a face, a dispassionate force of nature becomes accessible, subject to whim, and thus possibly within our sphere of influence. Order can be a double edged sword, reassuring and also terrifyingly ruthless in its steadfastness. But if it had a human face, Death itself might be bargained with.

Often we focus on a microcosm in order to make sense of the bigger picture. Seeing a part in isolation makes us see the whole in a different way, perhaps getting a better grasp on the order or intent behind it. Thus, I chose to display certain of the *Order From Chaos* pieces alongside several smaller works such as those in Plate 9, each a full-sized section of the original piece. Since each of these smaller works is complete within itself, an onlooker may enjoy it with no strings attached. But after perusing one or all of the smaller works, the viewer might return to the large work and conceptualize it anew, just as he or she might do after scrutinizing an aspect of a relationship, a scene, or a situation.

This method of presentation underscores one of many notable capabilities of the digital medium. It would have been difficult or impossible to create exact replicated sections of a work in most natural media.

I hope viewers find enjoyment and amusement in this group of artworks. I dedicate this series to our ongoing search for significance, order, divinity.