

# EDGE OF EPIPHANY



EXPLORING MANKIND'S CONNECTEDNESS  
TO EACH OTHER AND THE ETERNAL

Presented by

ANNA-MARIE ZURLINDEN

All artwork and original poetry copyright Anna-Marie Zurlinden 2020

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Noticing and creating beauty in the world is my artistic pursuit. I am largely influenced by the patterns found in landscapes, sacred geometry, fluid dynamics, fractals, textiles, and ancient man-made art and architecture. The repetition in these systematic forms is cyclical and infinite and conveys to me a sense of what is shared by mankind across time and culture—the desire to experience the divine, a quest to understand the world, and a longing to know beauty.

My most recent work explores our own DNA, which is the link to our ancestors of the past, each other in the present, and our progeny throughout the future. My work also contemplates our place within the universe and what we choose to pass on to those who follow us and to learn from those who have preceded us. Through these artworks, I share with viewers my appreciation of beauty and recognition of what is good in the human spirit—the desire to create something splendid and worthy in a world too often filled with wickedness and destruction.

## DEDICATION

*The life I touch for good or ill will touch another life, and that in turn another, until who knows where the trembling stops or in what far place my touch will be felt. – Frederick Buechner (Writer and Presbyterian Minister)*

This exhibit is dedicated to those family members who have passed through the threshold of life during the course of my NIU art studies.

Grandma Marie Richards Hoskins Zurlinden 2013

Grandpa Richard Zurlinden 2014

Aunt Loretta Redd Morris 2015

Aunt Sheri Sroka Redd 2015

Aunt Karen Hardgrove Hoskins 2016

Uncle Gerald "Butch" Hall 2016

Aunt Darlene Redd Ross 2018

Uncle John "Jack" Redd 2019

## EDGE OF EPIPHANY



On the edge of epiphany  
I straddle the event horizon  
Of ignorance and understanding  
As I contemplate forever,  
Where time and space exist as one,  
And nearly do I reach its edge  
How far does nowhere go, I wonder?  
At least as far as everywhere there is,  
Where each thing is defined by its negative space,  
And my inner eye spins through that emptiness  
With dizzying mach speed from bang to silence  
Every thing extending into no thing  
Until equilibrium of mass is reached  
Or it folds back in to itself  
And all existence becomes nothing again  
So here I stand between an ending  
Empty or dense  
Contemplating the moment now  
In a thought so fleeting it has already  
Sighed its last breath into the ether  
Before I ever comprehended its existence  
And in my reflection of the universe  
I see myself, more nothing than thing,  
And I wonder, how far does nowhere go?

## NEITHER CREATED NOR DESTROYED SERIES



*Everything is energy... Energy cannot be created or destroyed; it can only be changed from one form to another.* – Albert Einstein (Theoretical Physicist)

These drawings are inspired by computer models of four DNA cross sections, known as structures DNA A, B, C, and Z. This series reflects on the similarities between the fractal patterns in DNA and the sacred symbol of the Celtic knot, which symbolizes the continuous cycle of existence resulting from the connectedness of all things.

## THRESHOLD



*If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.* – William Blake (Poet and Artist)

Recalling the form of ancient monolithic structures full of mystery, this threshold beckons you to enter and discover what is within. Thresholds mark entries into the unknown, and doors may be open or closed. We each choose whether to cross their boundaries and explore what is on the other side, but how we ascribe meaning to the experience is a matter of our unique perception.

***It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see.***  
Henry David Thoreau (Transcendental Philosopher and Writer)

***It is entirely possible that behind the perception of our senses, worlds are hidden of which we are unaware.***  
Albert Einstein (Theoretical Physicist)

## SACRED SPIRIT OF THE ANCESTORS SERIES



*We are not physical beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a physical experience.* — Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (Idealist Philosopher and Jesuit Priest)

These creatures reference historical sacred spirit animals of the four largest contributions of the artist's personal DNA composition. Like leather jackets made of animal skin, the unique genes to which we attribute our identities are no more than remnants of the past that we don't like costumes to cover that which makes us one.

## ARTERIES



*We are all connected; To each other, biologically. To the earth, chemically. To the rest of the universe atomically.* — Neil DeGrasse Tyson (Astrophysicist)

This map-like artwork is influenced by multispectral satellite imagery where live vegetation (chlorophyll) shows up as hues of pink, red, and magenta while inorganic material or dead vegetation shows up in blues, greens, and black.

## OVERVIEW



*To confine our attention to terrestrial matters would be to limit the human spirit.* — Stephen Hawking (Quantum Physicist)

Reminiscent of the earth as seen from above in a map or overhead image, this work takes the perspective of looking down at the world from the vantage of a bird, a plane, or a god. What do you see?

## ENCODED



*The cosmos is within us. We are made of star-stuff. We are a way for the universe to know itself.* — Carl Sagan (Astrophysicist and Astrobiologist)

The universe is also a way for us to know ourselves. The truth and meaning of our existence are encoded in everything from the infinitesimal to the infinite, time-bound to timeless, internal to external. Fractals are found in the structure of atoms and replicated in solar systems and galaxies. These repeating patterns permeate all existence. They exist in the flow of water (or paint), the erosion of shorelines, and the growth of trees. They also present in the folds of our DNA, which forms the code that makes one uniquely individual and yet a part of the whole of humanity.

## URBAN HIVE

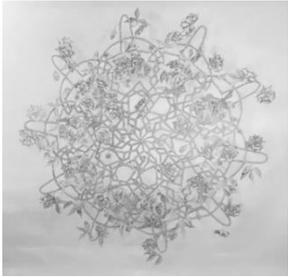


*We are all connected to everyone and everything in the universe. Therefore, everything one does as an individual affects the whole.* — Sere Kahili King (Hawaiian Shaman)

This painting was created on the anniversary of 9/11. It references beehives, hive mentality, urban living, and DNA electrophoresis (how DNA is analyzed). It also resembles images of the falling Twin Towers. The actions of many individuals that day transformed the world and remind us that we too are agents of positive or negative change.

## DREAM WEAVER

*All that we see or seem is but a dream within a dream.* – Edgar Allen Poe (Writer)



This cross section of DNA is layered in symbolism about physical and spiritual life as reflected in similar forms such as rose windows, dream catchers, mandalas, and Celtic knots. Wisdom seekers have long pondered the question of our true nature. Is the reality we perceive an evolving construct woven from our inherited cultural and religious knowledge, personal experience, scientific discovery, and new philosophical thought? Is our destiny fated by the nature encoded in our DNA or a matter of how we choose to nurture each other and our environment?

## MUMMY MAN SERIES

*For every worm beneath the moon draws different threads, and late and soon spins, toiling out his own cocoon.* – Alfred Tennyson (Poet)



This series of abstracted figures serve as proxies for humanity and may suggest cocoons, mummies, sleeping bags, death shrouds, body bags, bindings, oneself, or votive offerings. They also hint at ideas of death, transformation, solitude, and antiquity. The environment in which they exist further implies their individual stories.

***Life is a culmination of the past, an awareness of the present,  
an indication of a future beyond knowledge,  
the quality that gives a touch of divinity to matter.***

Charles Lindbergh (Aviator)

## ILLUMINATED SERIES

*Within each of us is a light, awake, encoded in the fibers of our existence. Divine ecstasy is the totality of this marvelous creation experienced in the hearts of humanity.* — Tony Samara (Spiritualist)



Referencing the Celtic-influenced artwork of medieval illuminated manuscripts, this series reflects upon the idea of enlightenment. Krishna, Christ, Lao Tsu, and Buddha are humans of divine status from four world religions. They each teach us to search for the spark of divinity within.

## DIVINE COMEDY SERIES

*I come from a place, I long to return to.* – Dante Alighieri (Poet)



This series is inspired by Dante's narrative poem, *Divine Comedy*, where he described a journey through hell, purgatory, and heaven during a moment in his life of spiritual adversity and awakening.

## RETURN TO EARTH

*My soul can find no staircase to Heaven unless it be through Earth's loveliness.* – Michelangelo (Artist and Poet)



Return to Earth and rediscover her divine beauty. When we leave the sacred space of the gallery, we metaphorically ground ourselves in mundane earthly matters, but let us not forget Earth is also holy ground. One day we will each literally return to earth in death. Until then, revel in this brief moment of eternity on this tiny vessel within the vastness of infinity.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Anna-Marie Zurlinden grew up in Streator, Illinois, but has lived in many places in the United States and abroad. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English at Millikin University, Decatur, Illinois, in 1991 and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Studio Arts with an Art History minor at Northern Illinois University (NIU), DeKalb, Illinois, in 2016. She also received a graduate certificate in Museum Studies from NIU in 2018. Between schooling, Anna-Marie served in the United States Air Force, specializing in information and intelligence operations. The ideas and experiences to which Anna-Marie was exposed through her education and prior career heavily influence the themes and content of her artwork.

## SPECIAL THANKS

I give my most heartfelt appreciation to the people without whom this show would not have been possible:

To my dad, Rick Zurlinden, for all the construction projects that have helped me make, store, and present my artwork.

To my committee members, Cindy Hellyer-Heinz, Rebecca Houze, and Billie Giese for their encouragement and sound advice.

To my museum studies instructor, Peter Van Ael, for giving me installation advice and exhibition know-how, and

To my photographers, Michael Allen and Amy Fleming, for their outstanding documentation of my work.

The most recent common ancestor of all alive today lived about 1415 B.C.

***No matter the languages we speak or the color of our skin, we share ancestors who planted rice on the banks of the Yangtze, who first domesticated horses on the steppes of the Ukraine, who hunted giant sloths in the forests of North and South America, and who labored to build the Great Pyramid of Khufu.***

Joseph T. Chang (Yale Statistician)