EDGE OF EPIPHANY

EXPLORING MANKIND’S CONNECTEDNESS TO EACH OTHER AND THE ETERNAL

Presented by
ANNA-MARIE ZURLINDEN

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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
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?

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

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)
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

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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)