

Steven Schroeder

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What I seek in my work (both poetry and painting, both process and product) is “lyrical abstraction”—“lyrical” primarily as a matter of time, “abstraction” primarily as a matter of space. As a matter of time, not one thing after another but every thing all at once. As a matter of space, the whole in every part, every other wholly other—as simple as possible, as complex as necessary, always a play of possibility. In poetry an eye for silence, in painting an ear for emptiness, in both a work of the hands.

“Lyrical” calls music to mind. More to the point, I believe, world calls mind to body in music. What we call “mind” is a lyrical structure that emerges as our bodies engage the world. This is a process of abstraction, creating a particular (simple) interface with which to engage particulars that, without the interface, would entangle us. We organize the particulars of the world (including our selves) in narrative (in language), but we encounter them first the way we encounter music: as Adorno suggested, we do not really hear the first note of a composition until we hear the last. We hear it as a whole, not a collection of parts; and that is also how we engage the world.

I don’t believe the work of art is a matter of “inner” or “outer,” impression or expression, or an object to circulate between the artist and the world. Nor do I believe it is a matter of representation. I believe it is a matter of abstraction akin to the emergence of “mind.” I believe it takes place—it is embodied—between bodies in the world, between you and me, one well-ordered collision (to borrow a term from Helen Frankenthaler) among others. Of course, whether a collision is well-ordered (or ordered at all) depends on all the “others” among whom it is an other, and that means the work is always a collaboration that (if it works) invites more than it contains.

In painting, my abstraction begins with color—almost always three “primary” pigments (a blue, a red, and a yellow) plus titanium white to desaturate and highlight. Occasionally, I add ink or graphite for depth or shadow where my intention is to create the illusion of an object. I almost always emphasize fields of color over line, counting on their overlaps, intersections, and inexplicable collisions to allow my eyes and others to find edges where there are none. In poetry, I most often have Paul Klee’s “taking a line for a walk” in mind – not filling silence with sound so much as seeking silence wherever I encounter a wall of sound. I believe language and music are both matters of silence and that (with Laozi in mind) nothing, more than anything, makes vision work.

Ph.D. University of Chicago · Ethics & Society · 1982

M.A. University of Chicago · Divinity · 1976

B.A. Valparaiso University · Psychology · 1974

Solo Exhibitions

Learning to See Nothing. **Eleanor Hays Art Gallery, Northern Oklahoma College, Tonkawa, Oklahoma** (2018) | A Gift of Fire. **Chalice Abbey Center for Spirituality and the Arts, Amarillo, Texas** (2018) | In the Path of Totality. **The Grandview Gallery, Ada, Oklahoma** (2018) | A Cloud of Witnesses. **Fremont Public Library, Mundelein, Illinois** (2018) | Circle Dance. **Arlington Green Executive Center, Arlington Heights, Illinois** (2017) | In A Landscape. **Meet Chicago Northwest, Schaumburg, Illinois** (2017) | Inflections. **Rolling Meadows Library, Rolling Meadows, Illinois** (2017) | A Mime Face on Memory. **Blackstone Library, Chicago** (2017) | Epiphany: what light does on edge. **Chalice Abbey Center for Spirituality and the Arts, Amarillo, Texas** (2017) | Dispersed Cities: Recent Work on Paper and Canvas, **The Paper Crane Gallery, Canyon, Texas** (2015) | Slow Light: Recent Work on Paper and Canvas, **Conrad Sulzer Regional Library, Chicago** (2013) | Works on paper and canvas, **2nd Avenue Art Guild, Dodge City, Kansas** (2012)

Selected Group Exhibitions

At Buttonwood Art Space, Kansas City: Visions of the Flint Hills (2023, 2022, 2021, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013); Serenity (2023); From the Earth (2023); Art of Discovery (2023); Rhythm and Reveal (2022); Abstract HeART For All (2022); Home (2021); Art for the Animals (2021); Nature's Bounty (2021); Connection (2020); Art of Kindness (2020); Celebration (2019); Beautiful Light. Hope. Healing. Wellness (2019); TA-DA! Inspire. Discover. Transform (2019); Bloom (2018); Resilience: the 4 Seasons (2018); World Visions, (2017); Urban+Abstract (2017) | **At Springfield Art Association, Springfield, Illinois:** Liturgical and Sacred Art Exhibit (2022, 2020, 2018, 2016) | **At the Creamery Art Center, Springfield, Missouri:** Pure Enjoyment (2022, 2021, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014); Music to My Eyes (2017) | **At Arts Illiana Gallery, Terre Haute, Indiana:** Landscapes (2021); The Crow Show (2020, 2018); The Road Show (2018); Arts Illiana Gallery Juried Exhibition (2018, 2016) | **At Tall Grass Arts Association Gallery, Park Forest, Illinois:** Anthology: Annual Tall Grass Gallery Artists Exhibit (2023); Symmetry (2020); Pentimento (2019) | **At the St. Louis Artists' Guild, St. Louis, Missouri:** St. Louis Artists' Guild Members Exhibition (2023); Ann Metzger Memorial National All Media Exhibition (2019, 2017); Regional Summer Exhibition (2014) | **At Eide/Dalrymple Gallery, Augustana University, Sioux Falls, South Dakota:** To Reform: Artists Respond to the Reformation (2017) | **At Mildred M. Cox Gallery, William Woods University, Fulton, Missouri:** Light and Shadow (2017) | **At Sulzer Regional Library, Chicago:** for the International Day of Peace (2016) | **At Ann Arbor Art Center, Ann Arbor, Michigan:** Annual All Media Exhibition (2015) | **At Community Arts Center, Danville, Kentucky:** Horizon: Contemporary Landscape (2015, 2014, 2013) | **At Freeport Art Museum, Freeport, Illinois:** 11th Annual Regional Juried Exhibition (2014) | **At Riverside Arts Center, Ypsilanti, Michigan:** 5th Annual Small Works Exhibit (2014) | **At Tomahawk Ridge Community Center, Overland Park, Kansas:** The Abstract Exhibition (2014); Art of the Center (2014) | **At K Space Contemporary, Corpus Christi, Texas:** Third Coast National (2014)