

M. Jordan Tierney
Exhibition at Gallery Imperato
Baltimore 2008

As I lived in an urban environment for twenty years, color gradually leached from my work, leaving black & white with greys. Ideas became shadows and absences. I believe this was due to the hopelessness of Washington DC where everything was hollow and overloaded at the poles of power. The powerful had sold their souls to get and keep it while those without had given up. My work reflected this dissolution of humanity.

Since moving to Baltimore in 2005 my work has changed. Instead of collages of ideas placed near each other in a vague way- leaving the viewer to float through them, the expressions are now more overt. As 3-D objects in space the works are literally presences, not shadows on the wall. An existence, a reality. With color!

Although the last eight disastrous years inspired this work, it bears the fingerprints of many centuries of human history. The more things change the more they stay the same. As soon as Bush began to implement his fear and greed policies, my work had no choice but to follow my thoughts. Artwork is unavoidably the result of the social context and environment in which it is made.

It began with 'newspoems' composed of intertwined articles from page A1 and A3 of the New York Times and evolved into the 3-D visions you see here.

It is timely that this exhibit will overlap with the election of a new administration. I am looking forward to a more optimistic body of work to come.

My wish is to bring to light the ways we humans act inhumanely toward each other; to ask "why?", remind us that we seem to never learn, and inspire some thoughtfulness and resolve to be positive rather than negative as a force in the world.

I like to consider evolution on different scales of time and space- from personal interior journeys to large societal trends to forces of nature. My work has always been about current events, both interior and exterior. I get inspiration from studying human relations and reading literature; our relationship to ourselves and the world, the beliefs and systems we invent, the dysfunction of an entity once it becomes an institution. We evolve more quickly than social systems can manage. We cling to the past, the known, and insist on repeating it. Accepting things as given ensures a lack of evolution. I want to uncover my assumptions.

I like to engage as many points in the brain as possible, creating links that did not previously exist. By repurposing the mundane and the cast-off, I create new perspectives; engaging memory in the present and opening a door to the future.

As I work, I feel a kinship with the miner, the fisherman, the crazy inventor in his shed, the 15th century carver of church icons, and the poet.

artifact- I am most interested in those who are self-sufficient and resourceful and who still manage to find meaning in situations that barely support life due to economic, political, psychological, and/or sociological challenges

ascension-

The song does not belong to the singer. The singer is found by the song...It was a wonder, a marvel- a mystery. It caused me to see in any case, that we are all limited, and, mostly, misshapen instruments, and yet, if we can, simultaneously, confront and surrender, extraordinary fingers can string from us the response to our mortality. - James Baldwin

It's not where the motivation comes from, but how to maintain it - Louise Bourgeois-

I think most artists create out of despair. The very nature of creation is not a performing glory on the outside, it's a painful, difficult search within. -Louise Nevelson

Works of art are indeed always products of having been in danger, of having gone to the very end in an experience to where man can go no further.- Rainer Maria Rilke

The one element, which I cannot explain but is essential to my process, is 'faith'; the persistent belief that the choices and conditions i create will distill into an experience that is openhandedly poignant.- Nari Ward

ICARUS

Do I, then belong to the heavens?
Why, if not so, should the heavens
Fix me thus with their ceaseless blue stare,
Luring me on, and my mind, higher
Ever higher, up into the sky,
Drawing me ceaselessly up
To heights far, far above the human?
Why when balance has been strictly studied
And flight calculated with the best of reason
Till no aberrant element should, by rights, remain-
Why, still, should the lust for ascension
Seem, in itself, so close to madness?
Nothing is that can satisfy me;
Earthly novelty is too soon dulled;
I am drawn higher and higher, more unstable,
Closer and closer to the sun's effulgence.
Why do they burn me, these rays of reason,
Why do these rays of reason destroy me?
Villages below and meandering streams
Grow tolerable as our distance grows.
Why do they plead, approve, lure me
With promise that I may love the human
If only it is seen, thus, from afar-
Although the goal could never have been love,
Nor, had it been, could I ever have
Belonged to the heavens?
I have not envied the bird its freedom
Nor have I longed for the ease of Nature,
Driven by naught save this strange yearning
For the higher, and the closer, to plunge myself
Into the deep sky's blue, so contrary
To all organic joys, so far
From pleasures of superiority
But higher, and higher,
Dazzled, perhaps by the dizzy incandescence
Of waxen wings.

Or do I then
Belong, after all, to the earth?
Why, if not so, should the earth
Show such swiftness to encompass my fall?
Granting no space to think or feel,
Why did the soft, indolent earth thus
Greet me with the shock of steel plate?
Did the earth thus turn to steel
Only to show me my own softness?
That Nature might bring home to me
That to fall, not to fly, is in the order of things,
More natural by far than that imponderable passion?
Is the blue of the sky then a dream?
Was it devised by the earth, to which I belonged,
On account of the fleeting, white-hot intoxication
Achieved for a moment by waxen wings?
And did the heavens abet the plan to punish me?
To punish me for not believing in myself
Or for believing too much;
Too eager to know where lay my allegiance
Or vainly assuming that already I knew all;
For wanting to fly off
To the unknown
Or the known:
Both of them a single, blue speck of an idea?

Yukio Mishima

bludgeonism-

People may oppose you, but when they realize you can hurt them, they'll join your side. - Condolezza Rice

collateral damage-

The strongest passions and most dangerous weaknesses of the human breast; ambition, avarice, vanity, the honorable or venal love of fame, are all in conspiracy against the desire and duty of peace. - James Madison

empire-

SONG ON PORCELAIN

Rose-colored cup and saucer,
Flowery demitasses:
You lie beside the river
Where an armored column passes.
Winds from across the meadow
Sprinkle the banks with down;
A torn apple tree's shadow
Falls on the muddy path;
The ground everywhere is strewn
With bits of brittle froth-
Of all things broken and lost
Porcelain troubles me most.

Before the first red tones
Begin to warm the sky
The earth wakes up, and moans.
It is the small sad cry
Of cups and saucers cracking,
The masters' precious dream
Of roses, of mowers raking,
And shepherds on the lawn.
The black underground stream
Swallows the frozen swan.
This morning, as I walked past,
The porcelain troubled me most.

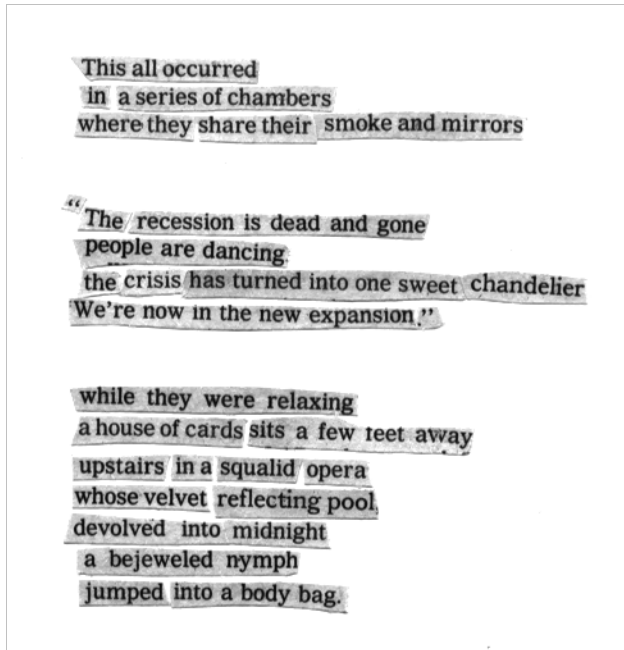
The blackened plain spreads out
To where the horizon blurs
In a litter of handle and spout,
A lively pulp that stirs
And crunches under my feet.
Pretty, useless foam:
Your stained colors are sweet,
Spattered in dirty waves
Flecking the fresh black loam
In the mounds of these new graves.
In sorrow and pain and cost,
Sir, porcelain troubles me most.

Czeslaw Milosz

piety- In Genesis it says, "God made man in his own image." when really, man made God in his own image.
We miss more by not seeing than by not knowing. - Sir William Osler, 19th C. Amer. physician

things put on pedestals- *The primary function of myth is to validate an existing social order. Myth enshrines conservative social values, raising tradition on a pedestal. It expresses and confirms, rather than explains or questions, the sources of cultural attitudes and values.... Because myth anchors the present in the past it is a sociological charter for a future society which is an exact replica of the present one.*- Ann Oakley, 20th C. British sociologist

thwarted-



A FEW RELATED FAVORITES:

James Baldwin- The Fire Next Time
J. G. Ballard- Empire of the Sun
John Dos Passos- The 42nd Parallel
Marlen Haushofer- The Wall
Thor Heyerdahl- Kon Tiki: Across the Pacific by Raft
Russell Hoban- Riddley Walker
Aldous Huxley- Brave New World
Masuji Ibuse- Black Rain
Denis Johnson- Fiskadoro, Tree of Smoke
Ryszard Kapuscinski- The Shadow of the Sun
Barbara Kingsolver- The Poisonwood Bible
Hari Kunzru- The Impressionist
Jonathan Lethem- Amnesia Moon, The Fortress of Solitude
Arnost Lustig- Lovely Green Eyes
Walter M. Miller Jr.- A Canticle for Liebowitz
David Mitchell- Cloud Atlas
Cormac McCarthy- The Road
Jose Saramago- Blindness
Varlam Shalamov- Kolyma Tales
Alexander Solzhenitsyn- One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch
Tatyana Tolstaya- The Slynx
Carl Watson- Beneath the Empire of the Birds