
CARL SCRASE

SYMMETRICAL SPIRIT GUIDES AND FRACTAL ALCHEMY

19 August - 5 September 2009

FRACTAL ALCHEMY AND SYMMETRICAL SPIRIT GUIDES (Closely followed by Synchronicity, Eternity, the Unknown and Beauty).

Tai Snaith, 2009



Carl Scrase is a perfect example of an artist marking the turn of a tide. At this distinct ebb of the ravenous, rampant seas of consumption and production we've been surfing for the past couple of hundred years and with the onset of the new flow, towards the riptide of Mayan prophesies of fast approaching 2012, Carl is on it, or should I say in it. And he's splashing around.

This new generation of creative humans (to which Carl belongs) are not really concerned with how much money, time or status something is worth, or what kind of flashy object the human next to them owns. They seem to be more interested in what kind of wisdom can be procured, how many friends can be found and how a thing can be recycled or was born from something else. It is all about a search for the spirit, the feeling. Moreover, what it *means*. We are getting sick of the bland smog of consumerism, the stench of blatant big business and seem to be looking for escape pointers, for enlightenment, for answers and for CHANGE.

Carl's work suggests his role as an artist is almost akin to a kind of medium slash alchemist – a self-proclaimed, new-age, anonymous shaman of sorts. Big boots to fill indeed, but don't worry, its not like Carl is about to declare himself a Secret Chief and start welcoming in the new Golden Dawn or reading your tarot at openings. Nor is he concerned with the alchemical properties and behavior of inorganic compounds or scientific explanations or measurements of the planets. His interest lies in noticing the sparkling mist of questions surrounding these things. The mystery and magic of how these marvels, such as symmetry and synchronicity occur in nature and how we can possibly learn from them and experience them in our day-to-day lives.

A true spiritualist in an atheist age, Carl uses his work as a kind of cipher for sorting his beliefs via a material creative process. His collages begin with found images from magazines, chosen relatively arbitrarily. His sculptures begin in a similar fashion with found objects, usually of the mundane or mass produced variety. It may be that they are all parts of images of human faces or just a complete add for a pair of Crocs or a hundred boxes of bull dog clips. Starting with the colour and then cutting the shape, or with the objects and then finding their natural function- almost as if listening to an instinctive, visual Ouija board somewhere in his subconscious. Carl then arranges the pieces through play. Similar to the way that you need to relax your eyes to receive the effects of a Magic Eye picture (remember them?), Carl relaxes his mind in order to let his collages find their final composition. This allows a kind of subconscious code to come forward, thus acting as both a reflection of his thoughts but also a kind of guide or suggestion for other's thoughts, and perhaps something deeper that we don't understand just yet.

I remember as a child I found an empty plastic tubular casing of a biro pen whilst walking along the beach one day. It had been washed and scratched by the ocean and gave the pale blue, semi-translucent plastic a soft almost sparkly effect. I picked it up and instinctively looked through the tiny tunnel at the sun. The way the sunlight refracted through the plastic before reaching my retina made me think of a magical kaleidoscope and I immediately classified it as having 'special powers', granting it prime position in my pocket for months. It became a type of personal talisman or spirit guide.

Traditionally, in animist belief systems (such as Shinto and certain parts of Hinduism) sprits need either an object or a medium (ie, thunder, lightning, wind, animals, plants, etc) to be experienced or seen by humans. They need something else to exist in order to communicate with us. Carl's images and objects seem to suggest or demonstrate this kind of medium as well as subtly questioning the message. In the same way that a child finds wonder in the changing symmetry of a Kaleidoscope before they even understand the science of the mirror involved, there is a wonder in these images and objects as soon as we encounter them. A wonder in creation, in ritual, in synchronicity and light. A wonder in life.

For Carl, the practice of Alchemy (and in this instance one might just as comfortably read Alchemy as Art) is 'not the search for some magic potion' but rather the 'awareness that all life is eternal and the inner peace that comes from that realisation'¹. Just as we recognise similar patterns within nature, like the spiral formation of a shell or the layering of petals on a flower or the direction of the hair growing on a man's scalp, we can notice these patterns on a spiritual and philosophical plane also. It doesn't take a genius to recognise a similar search for meaning and self-realisation being revisited amongst some of the most interesting artists of our time, but let's just hope that the search continues to prove that the process of making art itself is both the question and the answer.

¹ Carl Scrase, 2009.