

***In the Spirit of Wholeness:***  
**Integral Art and its Enchantment Aesthetic**

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This publication accompanies the international art exhibition *In the Spirit of Wholeness: Integral Art and its Enchantment Aesthetic*. While it was Jean Gebser, in his magisterial mid twentieth-century study *The Ever-Present Origin*, who perhaps first used the term integral in a systematic manner to characterize certain kinds of art, **integral art** as a category comes in the main from contemporary integral theory as seeded by the American writer Ken Wilber. Springing from Wilber's work, there has been over the past two decades a growing international and multi-disciplinary network that is impacting many activity-domains -- from business, leadership, economic theory, and sustainability studies to comparative religion, transformational practice, developmental psychology, consultation processes, and meta-theorizing. Many of the artworks in the current exhibition have been made by artists familiar with integral theory. The argument of this essay however is that it does not follow that knowing integral theory is a necessary precondition for artworks that are integral. Nor that knowing integral theory guarantees that one shall make integral artworks. What matters is the art itself and its constellation of aesthetic elements and qualities.

To ascertain what is distinctive about integral artworks, it is instructive to consider currents and conditions of Western art. Beginning in the Renaissance, taking off with romanticism, and flowering with modernism, art has been called upon with a new directness to express and engage ultimate concern. This increased call for art to serve exalted ends is one of the many dignities of post-modernity -- achieved, in the main, through the unprecedented growth of what scholars have called the "differentiation of value spheres" (the increasing manifestation of socio-cultural sub-systems): the state, religion, the economy, science, and other domains becoming differentiated from one another, each developing distinct practices, methods, theories, languages, institutions, and enhanced capacities. Art, once embedded in non-art contexts such as religion and politics, also became its own socio-cultural domain through the institutions of exhibition art, performance music, and literature. Coupled with (1) the rise and spread in the status and exercising of rational waves of cognition: (2) the differentiation and de-centering of religious

institutions from state apparatuses: and (3) declining belief (as with the Deists) in a pre-modern God as an old man in the sky (echoed, if in a different register, in the early modern phrase “the death of God”), ultimate concern became refracted and dispersed throughout the various value-spheres: secular politics as the means of creating a more just society; scientific progress as a vehicle of human self-determination; and art as a placeholder for the exploration of meaningful depth and compelling significance, in instances pointing us to the mystery of being itself, as with the sublime nature landscapes of romantic strains of poetry (e.g., Shelley) and painting (e.g., Friedrich).

For all its dignity, modernity has had its downside, in part due to the non-integration of the newly differentiated values spheres, leading to specific domains – in particular, the economy, administrative apparatuses, and scientific research aimed towards unending technological upgrades -- growing disproportionately in relation to the others, operating as if they were the organizing whole, dominating and “colonizing” the other domains, collapsing healthy public spheres of rational-ethical reflection as well as marginalizing advanced art and deep aesthetic experience, the resultant imbalances and dissociations engendering pathological modes of historically-constituted experience -- such as ever-shifting forms of alienation and reification -- that always already, behind our backs, invest our ways of life. In its present (post-modern) formation, these imbalances have taken shape as neo-liberalist economy and correlative cultural ideologies central to hegemonic systems of globalizing processes, where economic values, often of a reductively quantitative kind (e.g., profit), displace and override all other modes of good in any and all domains.

Also characteristic of post-modernity has been the rise of mass culture, manufacturing and reproductive technologies (today, electronic and digital), producing and disseminating commodities and information to large populations, inclusive of the circulation of mass cultural forms of art. Modernist discourses tended to look down upon mass culture in lieu of advanced art; whereas post-modern discourses, gaining momentum after the Second World War and sprouting in the 1970s and 1980s, deconstructed this hierarchy, positing that mass culture too has its moments of significant art (where advanced art is not always as profound as it proffers). Whereas there is truth in this position, there has been a substantial leveling of evaluative clarity and distinctions, the latest mass cultural trends and fads on par, even for scholarly study, with

tradition-defining and ongoing-nourishing works of unequivocally greater depth and subtlety (demonstrable beyond the cry of “one’s opinion”). Popularity, as in how many “likes” a work of art gets in social media; and success, as in how much money a film makes at the box office, are increasingly evaluative criteria of “aesthetic” merit.

Attuned to these and related historical pathologies and imbalances, philosophers and theorists beginning early on in modernity have repeatedly turned to advanced art and aesthetic experience as means for securing meaningful depth and for re-harmonizing our forms of life. Wilber, however, has argued astutely that advanced art as a differentiated domain could no more accomplish this re-integration than any of the respective value spheres, as it too is only a part of the whole. But what advanced art can do is create worlds that show us what more integrated forms of life can look and feel like. Art, as embedded in specific value domains and institutional matrices (and primarily engendering aesthetic inquiry as opposed to moral reflection or scientific research), cannot itself perform the integration; but art, in its showing us worlds that shine with truth and goodness, can model and inspire what more integrated forms of life might look like.

Which brings us to integral visual art as exemplified in this exhibition. Rather than some kind of break with the past, it is a gathering, intensifying, and reconfiguring of various historical pre-existing artistic currents. While embracing cultural diversity and global complexity characteristic of the post-modern moment, integral art renews romantic and modernist terms of enchantment, disclosing the world as having far more than only instrumental value and quantitative significance. The distinctive enchantment aesthetic of integral art has several interwoven dimensions.

One is the modeling of expanded states of consciousness which, following the perennial philosophy and its contemporary updates, attune us to domains and modes of being still too often neglected or dismissed in contemporary culture: inclusive of (1) subtle states that attune us to the luminous radiance of manifestation, (2), causal states that attune us to the edgeless emptiness and fullness from which all arises, as well as (3) boundless states of always already oneness (satori in Buddhism, God-union in the Abrahamic faiths; as two overlapping types). Profound modes of aesthetic shining and affectation come forth -- *types* of beauty and sublimity -- which disclose and demonstrate the inherent dignity and significance of beings and being.

Another line of world-enchantment is the modeling of a complexity beyond pluralistic logics that readily slide into value-leveling, fragmentation, and confused relativisms -- such higher modes of artistic complexity found as early as select instances of synthetic cubism and twentieth-century collage: the multiplication of elements, planes, perspectives, all with a discernable organizing meta-principle fostering dynamic and open wholes that, in the finest cases, allow for the simultaneously self-display of the singularity of the various component elements. In integral artworks, this kind of pictorial logic operates in any number of micro, meso, and macro ways -- from brushwork to modes of pictorial light to composition and syntax to the interweaving of such elements -- training one to perceive the meaningful interrelations of contemporary world-complexity, countering habits of additive and endless pluralization that decay into a collapsed view of world-randomness and lived-shallows.

Still a third aspect of integral art's enchantment aesthetic is cosmologic. With the separation of value spheres, the existential-cosmological impulse of many a great post-medieval artwork (e.g., Raphael's *Stanza della Segnatura*) tended to give way to specialized studies and domains of inquiry proper to the unceasing proliferation of value spheres (art itself now being one of those, a new specialized zone), these sundry modes of inquiry rarely integrated, such that big claims about economy and big claims about biological most often remain exterior to one another. In the splintering of value spheres as such, pre-modern religious views on the one hand and theoretical physics on the other have come forward as two of the principle views that count as cosmology. Whereas the former is a kind of collective reaction formation, recoiling from modern and postmodern alienation and fragmentation, taking us back in time to the ultimate concern horizons of a less fractured (but also less mature) historical world, the latter is often reductive, especially when proffering to account for everything in terms of the ever-smaller and evolutionarily primitive. In its orientation towards open dynamic wholeness and its provocation to grow into expanded modes of knowing the multi-dimensions of being, integral art evinces cosmologic views that often complement and enrich those of the various human and natural sciences as well as those of various religious lineages.

None of these dimensions in and of themselves are new in the modernist, avant-gardist, neo-avant-gardist, meta-modernist, visionary, and post-modernist moments of art in the West (and beyond the West). It is their (1) intensification, along with (2) several of these elements

productively constellated in a given work, which characterizes integral art's distinctive enchantment aesthetic. Integral art is an unapologetic affirmation of the meaningful richness and depth of existence, registering the dynamic wholeness of being (inclusive of negativity and absence), fostering health and vitality, in evincing a non-reductive integrative inclusiveness.

The remainder of this introductory essay offers brief commentary on each of the artists and their work, fleshing out singular expressions of integral art today.

**Monique Aguerre's** *The Dance of Form and Chaos* is a mixed media wall hanging, acrylic paint on canvas, intended for (1) beholder contemplation to be absorbed into the work's world (as proper to modernist exhibition protocols), and (2) beholder reflection on the environment, as the work interacts with its setting (in line with certain practices in the wake of minimalism, which were intended to counter modernist absorption) -- hence an integration of two seemingly opposed modes of exhibition reception and beholder engagement. In the artist's words, a "shape arises from a swirling cloud like a planet forming from cosmic dust. The Flower of Life emerges in the center of a lotus-petaled star. Mirrored facets reflect the interconnectedness of creation. The form arises from chaos and after a time it disintegrates back into formlessness in an endless dance. This mandala is an invitation to meditate upon the impermanence of form, the interconnection of creation, and the constant dance of change." This "interconnection of creation" and "constant dance of change" is performed aesthetically via the surfaces of the work as opaque, translucent, and radiant, constituting its own order (the artifact) while also emptied as reflective of another order beyond itself (the setting).

**Jennifer Baird** has lived in a tropical rainforest for thirty years. Her art has reminded some the visual aesthetic of the movie *Avatar*. And yet the comparison with *Avatar* falls short -- as that movie pre-critically romanticizes the spirituality of indigenous peoples. Baird's art goes further than that. In integral theory, there are four fundamental drives of the universe: the horizontal drives of agency and communion and the vertical drives of eros and agape. Eros is the "masculine" drive of self-transcendence and ascending development and growth; agape is the "feminine" drive of self-embrace and descending integration and health. Novel capacities and

emergent domains of being are proper to the transformations of eros. We add that through certain kinds of agapic descent, higher waves of being and development come not only to embrace and integrate but more profoundly to marry those lower and prior, this union giving birth to novel capacities in their own right -- a process of *transfiguration*. Baird's is an exemplary art of such agapic grace, as it does not merely return to the spirituality of the past, but instead transfigures it from high developmental address. As the artist herself says of her painting *Nexus Point Approaching*: it "hints at deep time, evolutionary flow of both the world and humankind and the immanent emergence of radically new and unknown possibilities. It has an organic and shamanic vibrancy -- enhanced by the strong textural qualities." The syntactical-compositional complexity of the work recovers and integrates lost intimacy with deep earth processes as well as marginalized modes of the feminine -- a guiding way for our planetary times.

**Claudinei Bettiol's** *Chaos of Transformation*, as with many of his works, brings to light individual and collective shadow, setting into motion the balancing of energies that constitute self and world. Rather than explore "the non-dual emptiness of completeness," he shows us the "emptiness of the material experience of duality." Brilliant glowing colors incarnating as flat lines, drips, splashes, and planar fields, open multidimensional spaces, each pictorial element distinctive in and of itself, the collective flows of these elements folding as discernible gestalts. The pictorial world is constituted as nothing other than these radiant elements and their incipient orderings; there is no magic show behind them, no essential exterior substance-ground to hold them. There is also no darkness as compared to light -- all manifestation is self-luminous and self-illuminative color, constituting pictorial worlds of being-and-becoming: the beingness of the self-presenting flat-frontal forms and the becoming of these elements as never done in their unwinding-refolding towards wholeness. Bettiol's integral art advances aesthetic completeness in presenting worlds of dualistic unfinish: for in the liberation of shadow, one is always already on the way.

**Stuart Davis** is an artist working in the genres of rock music (with a dozen and a half albums), comedy (including an AXSTV series that ran for two seasons), acting, and the visual arts. His *Lotus Crows* is a wall hanging integrating Eastern and Western idioms, painting materials, forms, manners of making marks, and contents, woven into seamless expression. Davis' work is especially engaged with the interplay of image and script. The artist's micro-calligraphy is a

language he invented called IS, which has various dimensions: horizontal (depth of altitude), vertical (affirming, negating), and creative (generative of new concepts for existing yet/not yet named referents). The pictorial forms are in part constituted through this script, the marks themselves hovering in local open void-like spaces of the background /surround-ground, resounding in silence. Manifest beings, like crows and trees, therein emit their own mantric call: being itself speaks, yet not naively so, as this is a human artifact aware of itself as bound to cultural traditions and contemporary concerns. East and West, macro and micro, form and emptiness, nothing and something, emergent image and primordial script -- all establish a silent visual world sonorous in singing the simplicity of *just this*.

**Hernán Furman's** *Pre-Personal Emergence I* offers the intimacy of drawing. The main human figure, echoing in part those of Mesoamerican art, has internal ornamental/micro-structural organization that is innovative and diverse in its sourcing, exceeding inspiration in any single artistic-cultural tradition. Shadowy elements alternate with brighter motifs; murkier forms counter-pose those clearly rendered. The figure's own outer boundary, as the bodily self, is at once discernable and uncertain: the raised arm perhaps also continuing with the graphic ornamental patterning at right; while the teeth-like white shards encircling the lower arm and body are indeterminately of/not-of the figure. This is pre-personal emergence through the lens of post-personal cognition -- or rather, the collapsing of object and subject in a harmonious simultaneity of the fragmentary and the fractal.

**Michael Garfield's** *Fire Flower*, like many works in his corpus, revels in the *esprit* of scientific illustration and the energy of musical vibration, affecting a fearless curiosity about what is. He is an "illustrator" -- a creative illuminator -- of the subtle domains of being, whose modes of existence are sonorously vibrational. In the Renaissance, architecture (like that of the great Palladio) was organized via ratios proper to musical harmonies, such that seeing the building was also "hearing" the harmony of that edifice and its lived spaces. In the early twentieth century, with the Renaissance view of painting and poetry as sister arts having falling away, new inter-media comparisons emerged -- as that between abstract painting and music -- exemplified in the work of Kandinsky. Garfield's art deepens this exploration of the art of painting as visual music, attuning us to the subtle vibrational aspects that accompany gross sound -- translated into folds of the visual register. His art is seamlessly synesthetic. We see, feel - and hear - the presence of

mysterious and magical subtle beings who pulse with vitality, challenging standard cultural assumptions about the what should count as Life.

**Jeffrey Ethan Jessum's** *Communing with Light* is inseparable from the artist's committed practice of cultivating expanded states of consciousness. In the artist's own words, "art is my meditation and prayer" nourishing the experience of "the non-ordinary in the ordinary," the "luminosity of existence that often eludes us in our everyday doings." *Communing* shows us a male figure whose body is semi-translucent, revealing inner organs, while also saturated with waves of glorious light that exceed the body itself and cannot be simply sourced as bodily in origin. *Communing* has many points of contact with Bill Viola's 1996 masterwork video installation *The Crossing*, where the physical gross body self-reveals its inner luminous subtle and elemental shining, without denouncing the physical. In Jessum too, waves of radiance shining from, around, and through the physical body, re-awaken our sense of the enchantment of everyday bodily existence.

**Android Jones'** paintings are one stream in his larger project of "Electro-Mineralist Art." Moving "beyond the traditional organic vegetable and animal technologies of pencils, ink, and brushes," Jones -- trained in academic drawing and painting -- embraces emergent technologies that are crystalline, metallic, electronic and digital in their materiality and aesthetic feel, implicating a historical scheme that echoes the integral theory view of planetary evolution (as adapted from Teilhard de Chardin): from physiosphere (earth geology) to biosphere (life forms) to noosphere (culture) to theosphere (subtle and casual domains); where the techno-media of exhibition artworks have been bound traditionally to or associated in the main with the biologic. The crystalline or "mineralist," seemingly confined to the physiosphere, is recovered as a marginalized inorganic principle and redeployed as artistic celebration of the full-spectrum of the energies of contemporary life. With *Electric Love*, the tantric beloveds are at once singular and intimate, cosmic and archetypal, vast and local. The red coding of the feminine is associated with heart, the blue coding of the masculine with the head; their loving embrace a gifting to one another in the back and forth flow of their respective energies – energies, too, that are no longer simply organic but also electric and digital as proper to the actual flows and currents of contemporary planetary existence. Honoring the history of art (the mystical projects of the later



Dali come to mind), Jones advances Electro-Mineralist Art as integral alchemy of the contemporary soul.

**Vesa Kivinen's** *LUX: A Culture of Radiance* is an art-video that mimes the form of a narrated documentary while being replete with filmic beauty and aesthetic disclosures of its content. It is an artwork onto itself and also serves as informational relay, communicating the artist's extra-exhibition art-intervention called LUX: an activist project oriented to re-enchant our dwelling on earth through the activation of the trans-cultural and pan-developmental archetypes of the Sun and the Solar. Radiantly binding us together, honoring our singularities and differences, LUX forwards a vision for our global commons that honors energy renewal, sustainability, and democratic access to materials goods. The project's combination of "the personal, societal and mythological" energizes our practical acts of love for the planet and for each other in the most integral of ways.

**Chandana Kulasuriya's** film *Inattention* foregrounds Visual Pollution as a pervasive dimension of contemporary life. One is reminded of Georg Simmel's notion of the overwhelming stimuli and speed of modern urban industrial environments and its impact on the human psyche, as presented in his classic 1903 essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life." Kulasuriya's film is originary, to be sure, in showing the problematic of Visual Pollution in its contemporary contours. The theme is explored through "the story of a young couple who are inseparable in love and companionship." The names of the lovers are Sri Lankian words for philosophy and for life respectively, their story an allegory -- the male lover, Dharshana, striving to move past post-modern (pluralistic) paradigms in order to be able to respond to and counter Visual Pollution. *Inattention* is a self-defining "post-postmodern" film, disclosing a problematic to which we are non-attentive: the dispersion and numbing of attention itself, attention thereby thwarted in reflecting on its own inattention; the film going beyond mere critique in opening towards creative options.

**Otto Laske** trained in philosophy with the legendary Frankfurt School thinker Theodor Adorno and in psychology with the equally luminous developmental psychologist Robert Kegan. Laske has created an innovative teaching and practice path of advanced dialectical cognition. He is also an artist having worked for decades in the media of music, poetry, and painting. His abstraction, *Magic Mountain* (calling to mind Thomas Mann's 1924 novel *The Magic Mountain*), is poetical

in the macro and micro flows of colorful elements. Forms are at once distinct and inseparable; some are based on algorithms. The compositional complexity is an aesthetic expression of the high-level dialectics that Laske otherwise teaches through his consulting firm: all forms having shifting and multiple contexts (lateral and in depth), flowing processes (a dynamism that hints at felt and unseen determinate absences yet to come forth), relationships (interdependence and co-constitution of elements), with the whole on the verge of its self-transformation. The painting disclosing a mountain-like formation, enchanted and magical, as if alive, inclusive of a *mathesis* as one of the folds of being.

**Tashi Manno**x, an Englishman and for many years an ordained Buddhist monk, has trained for decades in the arts of Tibetan calligraphy (defined as the art of beautiful writing, the art of exquisite hand-written linguistic marks; such is the aesthetic impact of the script that the verbal meaning need not be understood for the calligraphy to shine forth in profound significance). Today, Tashi preserves this tradition as a vehicle to communicate and transmit dharma, all the while adapting and updating his approach within and for contemporary contexts. He identifies three streams in his work: (1) contemporary and traditional, (2) contemporary black on black (as with *Hung*), and (3) illuminated iconography. In honoring contemporary contexts and concerns, some of his designs are presented as sacred tattoos. With certain commissioned work, he offers the option of including bespoke seals that are specific to the calligraphic project and its patron. In all cases, Tashi Manno's art is an expression of his long and devoted meditative practice and spiritual realization, such that his art energetically transmits the Tibetan Buddhist View. Grounded thoroughly in the pre-modern Tibetan tradition, incorporating modernist visual schemes, and being multi-cultural and post-modern in drawing on other calligraphic lineages such as the spatial awareness proper to Zen calligraphic practice (while preserving the Tibetan core of style), Tashi's art is an authentic and exemplary instance of a calligraphy for our planetary age. *Hung* is a case in point, integrating Tibetan script and syllables with post-modern complexity and exemplary visual clarity.

**Adam Scott Miller**'s *Celestial Shore* revises the sublimity of landscape painting, disclosing with love and wonder the boundless creative flows of subtle light always already folded in and with nature. His art, as he says, "evokes transpersonal, Integral, cosmic consciousness" as the "movement of human evolution is from the ego-bound to the transpersonal form, that transcends

and includes all states and stages it has held before.” “We are literally swimming in a sea of vibratory information” such that a kind of “spirit semiotics, the appearance and behavior of, these planes of energy...became sufficiently clear to me to articulately recreate through...my own visionary art.” Miller’s work is exemplary in its clarity and intensity of showing the often-suppressed dimensions of radiant luminous being. The view and general compositional of the scene is traditional for sublime landscapes. Yet, in addition, subtle energies reveal a vision that is cosmic in feel and scale, folded into the sky, replete with self-revealing geometries (proper to a “spirit semiotics”), evincing an infinite not to be grasped. A sublimity then to the second power, in interweaving the gross and subtle domains, that also unabashedly embraces the shine of beauty.

**Louis Parsons**’s triptych *The Human Story* sings the song of manifestation on the radiant cusp of form and formlessness -- what in integral theory is the domain of being proper to high subtle archetypes and boundless low causal empty-shining. Edging towards the monochromatic -- one recalls the history of the monochrome as vehicle of spiritual expression (Malevich, Klein) -- shimmering shades of blue are highlighted with glowing whites. The painting technique is sophisticated, replete with complex weaves of staining the canvas, thin washes, thicker brushwork, and impassioned impasto, the worked materials themselves a symphony in its own right. Form and content, color and paint are an integral whole of ecstatic exuberance -- a painterly celebration of manifestation in all its glory. A story too of human emergence from ocean to sky: from fetal-like pose to ascending flight and freedom -- the artist’s deeper cut on the evolutionary tale of the human.

**Philip Rubinov Jacobson** reinvents the light of painting. Medieval picture light is exemplified by stained glass windows, sunlight shining through opaque glass, the depicted figures “emanating” as colored visible light, illumined glass and image co-substantial, a sensory reflection of and pointer upwards, beyond this world, towards God as invisible Light. Post-medieval painting, beginning with the Renaissance, more substantially differentiates the literal materials of the image from what is pictured, generating more transparent surfaces through which one looks into a deep perspective space that re-presents the sensory world. Objects are revealed by a virtual light-source posited either as streaming into the picture from without or as shown within the scene. An achievement of great post-medieval artists, ranging from Raphael, El

Greco, and Caravaggio to Vermeer, Tiepolo, and Friedrich, was to figure expanded states of luminous being into this re-presented earth-bound world of natural light. Modernism yet again changed the game. Beginning with Impressionism and taking off with subsequent artists like Van Gogh, modernist works deploy local color as self-illuminating radiance, appealing to the eye alone within a differentiated (and at times dissociated) sensorium proper to the modern psyche. (This was the moment of coining the phrase “the visual arts.”) Some post-modern artists mobilized this modernist approach to light and color in yet a new direction, as with Warhol’s *Diamond Dust Shoes*, a work that, in comparison to a Van Gogh, is more like an x-ray, devoid of life, a reproduction of a reproduction, sliding surfaces without depth: a disclosure in art of the post-modern aesthetic of an alluring surface sheen that has today become all-pervasive. Jacobson in his turn unites the ascent (medieval) and descent (post-medieval and modernist) impulses of the Western painting tradition into a visionary panentheism where “‘Light’ in its myriad manifestations [is disclosed] as matter.” In *Fire Muse*, the complex brushwork and paint application -- in some places heavy and thick, in others more thinly applied in semi-transparent layers -- generates a miraculous light-being, such that the essence of the figure as fiery-rainbow light flows into the darker surround, the brushwork above the muse’s blazing head reverberating the texture and rhythm of flame -- integrating the post-medieval paint application of wrought surfaces of a Rembrandt with the colored marks (*tache*) of self-glowing color of a Monet; an alchemical transmutation of paint into light and light into paint.

**Amanda Suutari** is “fascinated by the patterns and colours found in Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic art” as well as drawn to “animal/nature archetypes [of various cultural lineages].” With an eye to “visionary art, both traditional and contemporary,” such disparate elements are brought into an integration that achieves what in cognitive development is called *second order simplicity*. *Eye Pod* is indeed deceptively simple. It has depth layers of patterning, spaces within spaces, weaves of binary contents -- sky and earth, plant and animal, microbe and the human ornamental -- all in presenting the birthing of eyes. These eyes look back at us, if mysterious in their metaphysical status, not quite of the order of fantasy or surrealist dream, their gazes never menacing or invasive but instead the pupils opening into a depth of invite. By exploring “new ways to juxtapose the ancient with the post-modern” Suutari creates a work of integral uncanniness.

**Gordon Wood's** art is concerned with nature. As he says, "Nature -- nonlinear, complex and dynamic -- is the phenomenal, cognitive, intuitive, and reciprocal ingredient for me as an artist...I work with the elements of the natural system and rearrange them. I try not to do any harm to the source, while I hope that the objects I create let us see the human-nature experience in a compact and expansive form. Nature is the symbiosis of the flux of chaos, mystery and organization. Our rational experience of nature is the challenging element." According to integral theory, humans are physical and biological beings, strands in the web of life, while also beings of culture and thought, the latter transcending and embracing the physical and biological domains. (Destroy all culture and molecules and life-forms remain; destroy all life-forms and culture is no more. Surprising as it might sound, nature is in culture and not the other way around.) Yet culture and thought have not simply nor neatly transcended and embraced biological and physical nature, but have striven to dominate it, resulting in an unhealthy fit that is now coming to the fore in issues like the ecological crisis. Wood himself has a unique view of this problematic: "We are the wild cards in the natural deck, put there to test nature's resiliency. We fool ourselves into thinking that we can impose order on a system that nature already has functioning in a flowing existence." This is not to negate culture and mind but to explore a right balance. *Efflorescence In-Scape's* compositional symmetries are seemingly a cultural conceit and cognitive construction; yet too they remind us that nature possesses such symmetries, that symmetry itself (as that of our bodies) is not a mental fabrication. In this painting, linear and painterly forms, smooth and textured marks, bold gestalts and sensory particulars that exceed such defining embrace "celebrate the energy and mystery [of being] in [all its] sensuous detail." Wood's art discloses nature, not in the mode of a scientific truth, but in the equally important if undervalued manner of an artistic truth -- a truth that shines forth in voiding the impulse to control or escape from our natural condition, nature serving as art's model in its generativity and overflowing fecundity. Or as Wood himself says, "Human art gives us glimpses of the truth that art is nature."

Let these brief introductory remarks along with the artist statements and biographies that follow aid in your own entry into the glories and riches of these integral works of art.