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The school of arts & sciences: Todd Siler takes DaVinci Award for breaking down the walls

Todd Siler's multimedia work fuses diverse art with scientic concepts. Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, NYC

By Peter Jones

Calling Todd Siler an artist is like calling Cirque du Soleil a circus.

The words are accurate on a broad level, but do not truly describe the diversity or the spirit of either.

Aurora’s Todd Siler is the 2011 recipient of the World Cultural Council’s Leonardo DaVinci World Award of Arts. Siler has advocated full integration of the art and sciences for decades. Photo: Steve

Among other descriptors, Siler is also an author, an educator, an inventor and a researcher into the nature of creativity.

More specifically, Siler, 58, is a sculptor and a painter, but he is no steadfast right-brainer. He holds patents for several computer and printing-related inventions.

Over the years, the Aurora resident has consulted with interests as varied as major corporations and the Cherry Creek School District while promoting his ideas to education and business environments.

While many others have advocated a multidisciplinary approach, Siler has been on the forefront of championing full integration of the arts and sciences for more than three decades.

In 1986, Siler became the first visual artist to earn a Ph.D. at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and he has been known to apply everything from plasma physics to neurology into his eclectic multimedia creations.

In 2006, Siler proposed an “environmentally friendly” alternative use for controlled

nuclear fusion with an art exhibit at New York City's Ronald Feldman Gallery.

The son of an aspiring concert pianist and a bio-medical researcher, Siler was a child prodigy. In the years since, his work has been displayed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow and the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, among many other venues.

This month, the World Cultural Council awarded Siler its Leonardo DaVinci World Award of Arts.

"This recognition is for his extraordinarily creative and innovative contributions to contemporary and visual arts, for stimulating creativity, inspiring innovation and uniting art and science to enrich the experience of creative learning," the council's announcement said of Siler.

The Villager recently asked the DaVinci recipient about his approach to art and science, and about being a modern-day Renaissance man.

Villager: What does DaVinci mean to you as a 21st century artist?

Siler: He was probably the quintessential inventor and visionary that we point to from all cultures. When you look at the body of the inventions and innovations he articulated and drew, they really reveal a mind that is curious about everything. Obviously, he was one of the most inventive spirits.

Villager: He also typified what we have historically called the Renaissance man. You have put that approach in the present tense when you talk about the confluence of today's arts and sciences.

Siler: When you think of Albert Einstein, he was every bit what DaVinci was. We don't tend to think of Einstein drawing and visualizing things in as rich and varied ways as DaVinci. But Einstein was a poet in the way he looked insightfully at things.

Maybe a better example would be Steve Jobs. Here is a person that every human being on the planet can relate to. He took the sum of his knowledge and applied it in a way that transformed our technology. He had a very fertile imagination.

Villager: Jobs was an innovator, but was he an artist?

Siler: I would regard him as an artist in the way he visualized and conceptualized. It's not simply drawing, painting, sculpture or new media. It's representation of thought. Under that larger definition, you can see how Jobs would be an artist. His representations of thought were visualized through computers and our experience with computers.

Villager: When saxophonist Ornette Coleman improvises, is there science involved?

Siler: There is. He may not call it science, but certainly there's a mass underlying it with structures and patterns that are very, very precise.

Villager: You've written a book called Think Like a Genius. The title makes it seem as though we're all capable of sheer brilliance.

Siler: I think we are. Genius is in every human being in some way, shape or form. But most people don't discover it for hundreds of reasons. Tapping into that and being aware of that is a self-discovery process.

Villager: How does a workaday shlub tap into his genius?

Siler: Something happens by catastrophe, urgency or by accident. That individual may end up being inspired by something that comes out of the blue. It could be a problem or a challenge in his office that is unsolvable by anybody else, and suddenly this everyday person looks at the problem very differently and doesn't need any more than a doodle on the back of an envelope to suggest his idea. It happens all the time. I'm in workshops with people that have all kinds of expertise in an area, and oftentimes they're not the ones who make the breakthrough. It comes out of leftfield.

Villager: Have you discovered a scientific or artistic discipline that simply doesn't relate to other areas?

Siler: If people have this notion of the scientist working with a lab coat on, they're not inclined to see scientists as artists or vice verse. Scientists are every bit as creative as artists. You have people in theater arts who would say what Steve Jobs did is a form of theater arts because he's entertaining us and he's using every aspect of the human experience to make the experience of using computers awesome.

The best people in the theater arts, the ones who are doing really forward-reaching presentations are often integrating the different sensibilities we're talking about. Some might say the Blue Man group is like that or an illusionist like David Copperfield. Cirque du Soleil is incredible engineering. Look at Avatar by James Cameron. He is doing art, science and technology – all of it.

Artists are just as capable of making breakthroughs happen or raising fundamental questions that scientists have to deal with. MRIs are getting artists to think about the human experience in a very different way. There's a beautiful confluence now where people are thinking beyond their limited definitions.

readingeagle.com

Schira, Ron. “Art review: Pondering universal questions through art.” *Readingeagle.com,* August 28, 2011. http://readingeagle.com/article.aspx?id=328670

Art review: Pondering universal questions through art

By Ron Schira

If one were to name the instances in which art was a vehicle for devotion, well that would be quite an undertaking. Yet, as attitudes evolve, and science queries belief, our technological perception of the universe and the definitions of what life and God may be have been challenged to consider a less amorphous comprehension of those hitherto unsolved mysteries. And art, as it is wont to do, attempts to express the absolute, but in decisively less mystical terms.

Pursuant to that end, the Freedman Gallery of Albright College has invited New York artist Todd Siler to display his science-minded artistic explorations. Titled "Neuro-Impressions," the exhibit continues through Sept. 18 and features a number of large unframed wall pieces on canvas, some smaller works on paper in the side gallery and a handful of tall freestanding sculptures.

The artworks make reference to nature and the universe but do not explicitly describe or give furthermore details than the titles suggest. Siler's subject matter is more poetic as it converts, for instance, brain waves and their relationship to the cosmos into textured color and layered form. The work asks artistic questions about the temperament of reality rather than presenting exacting explanations, as perhaps Steven Hawkings would.

His methodology exhorts a collage aesthetic and urges the artwork somewhat sculpturally into the viewer's space by attaching cut pieces of painted canvas, photos and other materials onto the larger cloth. These attachments cavort and drift atop those surfaces and appear as either celestial phenomena or expressions of energy and other forces - some more extravagant than others.

For example, "Tsunami Mind Waves" adapts a 10-foot sheet of painted gray canvas and pinches the central area outward in order to create a symbolic mental surge of energy: simple, but very effective on that scale.

Another, "Roping Our Representations of the Brain-Universe Connections," incorporates photos, text, rope and twine amid stained and textured paint. The rope encircles a more detailed section of the painting as if it were lassoing, or even whipping, at something intangible and more than a little elusive.

Strategically positioned in the right-hand area are his freestanding, what he calls compression sculptures. About 6 feet tall each, these are cylindrical in shape, hollow, inwardly curved and welded to a base plate. They are manufactured of glossy printed aluminum sheets that hold images such as a photo taken from the Hubble Telescope. The picture, though, is distorted by the curve and stretch of the reflective surface and indecipherable until one gets close.

The smaller side room contains a number of his drawings and watercolors, both with and without collage. These are basically his studies and installation procedures for the compression sculptures. Also included is a sketch book of his extemporaneous thoughts, which requests on the label that visitors do not touch the book but return each day of the show to see a different page. Plan your schedules now.

Attractive, well made, these clever artworks not only utilize the mind-boggling properties of modern physics to bring attention to the universe, but double as a vehicle for art to intermediate the inexplicable.

Courtesy of Ron Schira "Entangled Minds," by Todd Siler.

Courtesy of Ron Schira "Tsunami Mind Wave," left, and a compression sculpture by Todd Siler.

Courtesy of Ron Schira "Roping Our Representations of the Brain-Universe Connection" by Todd Siler.

M-1000. "Sci-Art: Exploring the Brain and the Role of the Artist." *nyartsmagazine.com*, November 27, 2004. http://nyartsmagazine.com/articles.php?aid=687.

NY ARTS

Saturday, November 27, 2004

SCI-ART: Exploring the Brain and the Role of the Artist

By M-1000

The artist is the man in any field, scientific or humanistic, who grasps the implications of his actions and of new knowledge in his own time.

He is the man of integral awareness. - Marchall McLuhan

In the '60s, Nam June Paik documented how Norbert Wiener and Marshall McLuhan's had similar ideas on Cybernetics: that the binary system of computers today originated from the "on/off" character of the neuron synapses of animals. The commonality portrayed between the brain and machine feeds each of them to explore what they are capable of. For example, the study of the brain becomes the diagram of how a computer system should be built and a computer simulation models the possibilities of the brain. The study of AI is one where neural and electronic data melts in one pot and a Frankenstein wonderland is made possible. Today's artists are fascinated by the scientific information in brain research and it is of no wonder that their artistic medium of expression also deals with systems of MEDIA. Two artists, Lee Boot and Todd Siler look at the brain but in different contexts and with the use of different media. Diversely, the brain is explored through the medium of film / TV by Boot and through books by Siler. By doing this, these artists present a new way of looking at the role of the artist.

Since 1991, Baltimore artist Lee Boot has been working with the theme of the brain while making a series of narrated video singles entitled Making Art with Tape. It was the combination of Boot's background as a High School arts teacher and being encouraged by a Neuroscientist named John Shield that sparked the idea of making an educational film series / potential TV Pilot called Euphoria. One of the purposes of this film idea is to speak to young people about the power and capacity of the brain, not in the voice of a scientist hosting an educational flick, but as an artist speaking about the creative aspects of building fulfillment. By 1997, Boot wrote an abstract for the Society for Neuroscience in New Orleans and did a poster talk about how an artist like himself would be the vehicle to identify and generate meaning out of factual scientific information to the public, especially to youngsters. At that time, people from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) were at the convention and encouraged Lee to submit grant proposals. Euphoria came to life.

The film series Euphoria directed, written, and hosted by Boot is compelling. It has all the right ingredients for a culturally significant art project. It is educational, informative, and carries a popular voice. Nevertheless, it doesn't lose the very innovative and artistic vision that makes the piece cutting edge. Funded by NIH, the film series is made to steer teens away from substance abuse and instead learn how to "get high" by being creative and "happy". If Jean Rouch made the film Chronique d'un ete ('61) to ask everyone in Paris if they were happy, this is a film series that can inform people in America on how to be happy. "We want to make an artwork that conveys vital information — in this case, the neuroscience of happiness. We're putting art, science, TV and film into a bowl and stirring them all up and making something ELSE." (Boot).

The title "Euphoria" is taken from the chemical reaction in the brain when one is in a state of happiness. Located in the skull, the limbic system has a reward pathway that allows one to feel euphoric moments. By doing things that makes one feel rewarded, a person's brain changes in response. In a sense, the film series is a humanistic and cultural campaign on how to achieve more euphoria. Furthermore, rather than being a "how to" manual, the film provides a vast space of people appreciation time and meaning. Portraits of characters are chosen to express their very own passion in life and how they go about getting it. The first prototype was a spectacular quasi documentary / music video / video art that informed viewers about the scientific facts of how the brain functions during euphoric moments and in turn, how this state affects the body and spirit.

Up to this point, Boot has worked with a team of neuroscientists and an evaluation team for the many phases of grant writing. His first film prototype has been so well received that offers will be made by various cable and broadcasting networks. But, there is a twist. What Boot wants for this film series is to circulate underground, perhaps through music and tape stores, sold as DVDs in ziplocks... (thinking like an artist). So there is money involved–that is the risk–from the NIH backing him up to be a new model for the war on drugs. And this gives Lee tremendous power, freedom, and responsibility. If it was a broadcasting station funding such a project, too much might be altered to please TV ratings, if it happened to be an art patron or institution, it might be too much about the donor's taste. Somehow, in this case, the world of medicine and science seems to want to give the artist the space and funding to create art that would represent their concerns. Boot comments, "The key strength of art is creating a cultural affect. Cultural effect are echoed in social attitudes, and social attitudes influence individual belief, individual belief influences individual intention, individual intentions influence individual behavior." Boot, as an artist, plays the role of expressing what is profound in information to the world to create a better society, he is a humanist and an activist, and he is using the age of science in its most effective ways. How about that for a role model for teens! (www.makeu4ia.com)

Another artist, Todd Siler from Colorado sees the human brain as quintessential art. According to Siler, "the human brain is art, in its purest form, both materially and conceptually. It's the living embodiment of "artscience," a phenomenon of communication that occurs when the arts are so fully integrated in the sciences that they become indistinguishable from one another. Their differences blur in the vanishing point of experience ... ...My personal philosophy of Art and Art-making and Art-appreciation begins and ends with the human brain. For me, Art is All Representations of Thought." Siler is the author of the book Think Like A Genius (Bantam, '97), which sold over 80,000 copies and published in eight languages. He is also the founder and director of Psi-Phi Communications, LLC, and the Think Like a Genius Program for Education. Foremost, he is an artist and a creator of

the philosophy Metaphorming.

The idea of metaphorming helps people become geniuses by excelling their thinking and creative capacities. In turn, this helps people perform at their highest level of excellence to achieve their goals. The program initiates the notion that genius thinking isn't about the who but about the how. In sense, a person does not have to be a genius to think like one. A person who can think creatively and critically can be capable of enriching their own life. The foundation of this thought process is to find methods of problem solving by building symbolic models that helps people clarify their visions and thoughts and organize a way of communication. In other words, this metaphorming process is "what artists and architects do when they use symbolism, signs, stories, visual metaphors and physical analogies to show and share their ideas, knowledge, wisdom, and experiences, what scientists and mathematicians do when they use symbolic representations to "Show-and-Tell" their ideas and research findings. It helps them see the unseen..." (Siler)

Siler is represented by Ronald Feldman Fine Arts in New York and has an international track record of exhibitions. His artwork is also collected by major art institutions such as the Guggenheim, Metropolitan, MOMA, and Whitney to name a few, but what distinguishes him from all other art stars is perhaps his ability to communicate to people beyond the art world. In 1995, he was awarded the "Artist of other Year" award from New York Teachers Association and United Federation of Teachers. Similar to Lee Boot's work, Siler is an artist who is also an influential educator of art and science. In some respect, his book Think Like A Genius is his most creative and socially effective art piece made yet and he has set new grounds for what it means to be an artist of our time. (http://www.thinklikeagenius.com)

Another highly recommended art project that deals with the subject of the brain is by Nina Sobell. An artist based in New York, she has been working with interactive installations involving people non-verbally communicating with their brainwaves since 1973 in a series called Brainwave Drawing. Recently, this artwork has evolved into an Internet art piece Brain Streaming Project that allows different participants around the world to signal brain-wave outputs through the Internet in real time. In sense, her work orchestrates a World Wide Web of collaborative brain-wave drawings.

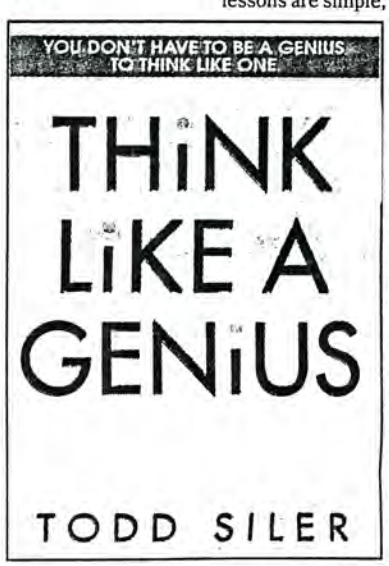
(http://www.cat.nyu.edu/parkbench/portfolio/). o

Dumas, Alan. "Work of Genius."
The Rocky Mountain News,
February 5, 1998: 8D.

Todd Siler, author of *Think Like a Genius*, says thinking like a genius is a physical process.

Work of genius

Brilliant is as brilliant does, author says



By Alan Dumas
Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer

Mozart and Einstein may have been geniuses, but they're so heroic they make thinking like a genius seem remote and impossible.

So says Todd Siler, author of *Think Like a Genius* (Bantam, 294 pages, $23.95).

"Works of genius ~~are more like~~ include the paper clip or the pushpin or the Post-It note," Siler says. "Everything in your house was a stroke of genius at some point. Someone had a concept and fully implemented it."

Siler, who lives in Englewood, is a modern artist with a major international reputation. He earned a Ph.D. at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology by exploring the connection between art and psychology. He was, in part, looking for the essence of genius. His first book, *Breaking the Mind Barrier,* drew on everything from physiology to Buddhism to explore creativity and brilliance. It was highly acclaimed but too esoteric for the average reader.

"So for my next project I wanted to write a very basic book about exceptional thinking," Siler says. "I wanted it to be very practical, not theoretical, something anyone could use."

The result is *Think Like a Genius,* which he published through his Colorado company Psi-Phi Communications. It became an instant best seller, and Bantam Books quickly bought the rights and ran a hardcover edition of 50,000. It's already been translated into Portuguese, Chinese and German.

"Originally, it sold well as a business book, but Bantam doesn't want it compartmentalized," Siler says. "It's a book that could benefit anyone."

So how does one think like a genius?

"See through things, and see things through. It's a two-step process," Siler says.

By "seeing through things," Siler means thinking integratively: You have to see a thing outside its normal context or take an idea from one context and apply it somewhere else. He calls it "metaphorming."

"Making a film and building a house have these specialized languages, but if a builder and a filmmaker were to talk they'd discover they work along a very similar process," he says. "And maybe the filmmaker could borrow a concept from the builder that might revolutionize filmmaking. Real geniuses understand this kind of thinking and do it all the time."

One of Siler's favorite examples is Leonardo da Vinci, who saw in a tree the basis for both a canal system for Florence and the essence of the human circulatory system. It was natural for him to think outside the box, to break down the barriers of context.

"All fields connect with all other fields," Siler says. "Learn how to search and the world is an endless place of learning. I call this concept being an expert novice, someone able to ~~forget~~ what they know in order to discover what they don't know."

The second half of genius is bringing a new, abstract concept into view for everyone. It's not enough to imagine a light bulb — you need to make one. That's what Thomas Edison did, and it took months and nearly drove him crazy.

"Great thinkers are humble," Siler says. "Edison, one of our great geniuses, said he thought he must be the unluckiest man in the world. Inventing was hard work for him. Geniuses must allow themselves to fail."

Think Like a Genius is packed with illustrated metaphorm exercises aimed at breaking down barriers of thought. Although the lessons are simple, Siler warns that thinking outside the crowd takes courage.

"Why do most kids idolize a basketball star and not a parent or teacher?" he says. "Those are the people who bring kids purpose and inspiration. But kids don't see them as deeply successful. Perceiving things differently and not conforming to the ideas of friends is hard."

Siler doesn't believe in quantitative devices such as IQ tests to measure genius. He says genius should be judged by action.

"Thinking like a genius is a physical process, not contemplative," he says. "It's about moving forward and doing things, not just sitting and thinking."

"Think Like a Genius." *Publisher's Weekly,* September 15, 1997: 61-62.

THINK LIKE A GENIUS: Use Your Creativity in Ways That Will Enrich Your Life

Todd Siler, Ph.D. Bantam,. $23.95
(304p) ISBN 0-553-10732-1

Originally self-published, this collection of creativity exercises introduces the term "Metaphorming." Siler, an artist and scientist who develops multimedia learning materials and leads creativity seminars, explains the concept as "a combination of *many* processes of connection-making." Using the acronym "C.R.E.A.T.E." (connect, relate, explore, analyze, transform and experience), he guides readers through a series of challenging activities to break through the most common "self-imposed barriers" to creative thinking. For Siler, writing, drawing and building models awaken the human brain's "creative operating system," which he contends is the same for everyone. Thirty examples of metaphorming illustrate Siler's method, pushing one toward reconnecting mind, body and spirit, resisting fear and cynicism, and embracing paradox. Each has a title, such as "Never Pass on Your Passion," and is composed of a "connection" ("If you don't love it without money, you'll never love it with money") followed by a "discovery," an "invention" and an "application" to real life. Drawings, cartoons and photos invite a series of increasingly creative connections between seemingly disparate items and ideas. Siler moves freely among psychological and philosophical insights in search of a new, "integrative" way of thinking. His entertaining ideas and exercises will motivate curious readers to learn and use "creative seeing" and problem-solving techniques.

Siler, Todd. "Think Like A Genius".
Inventor Book Review, (1996).
http://tenonline.org/art/brv/9806.html.

Inventor Book Review

Think Like A Genius

By Todd Siler, 1996, 294 pages, $23.95, ISBN 0-553-10732-1, Bantam Books

If you stumbled across this book at your local bookstore, you might make the mistake of thinking it is just another book that promises to make you a creative genius overnight. The fact that it is written by a man with a Ph.D. degree might also turn you off since there is a popular belief that Ph.D. really means "pile it higher and deeper".

If you are a real world, hands-on type person, you are leery of any professorial type how-to-do-it book. However, if you passed it by based on this first impression, you would be missing one of the best current books on the subject of creative thinking. The author is not only an inventor (computer imaging, textile printing) but is also an internationally recognized artist.

The book he has produced conveys, in down to earth language, tremendous insights as to how you can become more creative. He also provides almost two hundred sketches and drawings illustrating his approach to firing up your creative side. He starts out with the deceptively simple observation that creative problem solving is based on finding information and applying it productively. This often involves what Leonardo da Vinci called "creative seeing".

His basic mental tool is what the author calls "metaphorming". He derives this word from the word metaphor, which, you may recall from your high school English classes, is a figure of speech that compares two unlike entities and fuses them into a new entity. For example, "iron horse" (for a train). However, he greatly increases that definition to cover the entire process of inquiry leading to discovery and invention.

He believes "We are all born with the ability to create, explore, learn, discover, and invent -- that is, to metaphorm". The book is devoted to overcoming the mental barriers we have acquired in life that impede creativity.

He explains the metaphorming process by applying the acronym C.R.E.A.T.E. (Connect, Relate, Explore, Analyze, Transform, Experience) to the four levels of metaphorming: Connection-Discovery-Invention-Application. This description may seem abstract. But his sketches, such as how Leonardo da

Vinci connected and related his observations about tree branches to the engineering of the waterways of Florence to the sea (by canals and sluice gates), show that metaphorming is simple and that it is practical.

The author devotes an entire chapter to fear and another to cynicism. These very human negatives can also be positives when they are recognized and dealt with. Another chapter suggests how to replace habit by choice. Yet another chapter describes the means by which you can "make the obvious more obvious". He gives as an example the two mothers who observed how two-year-olds delight in watching other babies smiling. They produced a short videotape of just close-ups of such smiling babies ("Baby Mugs"). Children are entranced watching it. The tape sold at the rate of thousands per month!

Do you allow your emotional mind to color your rational mind? He observes that "the flip side of boredom is creativity" and that those noted for creativity usually find life fascinating during their entire life.

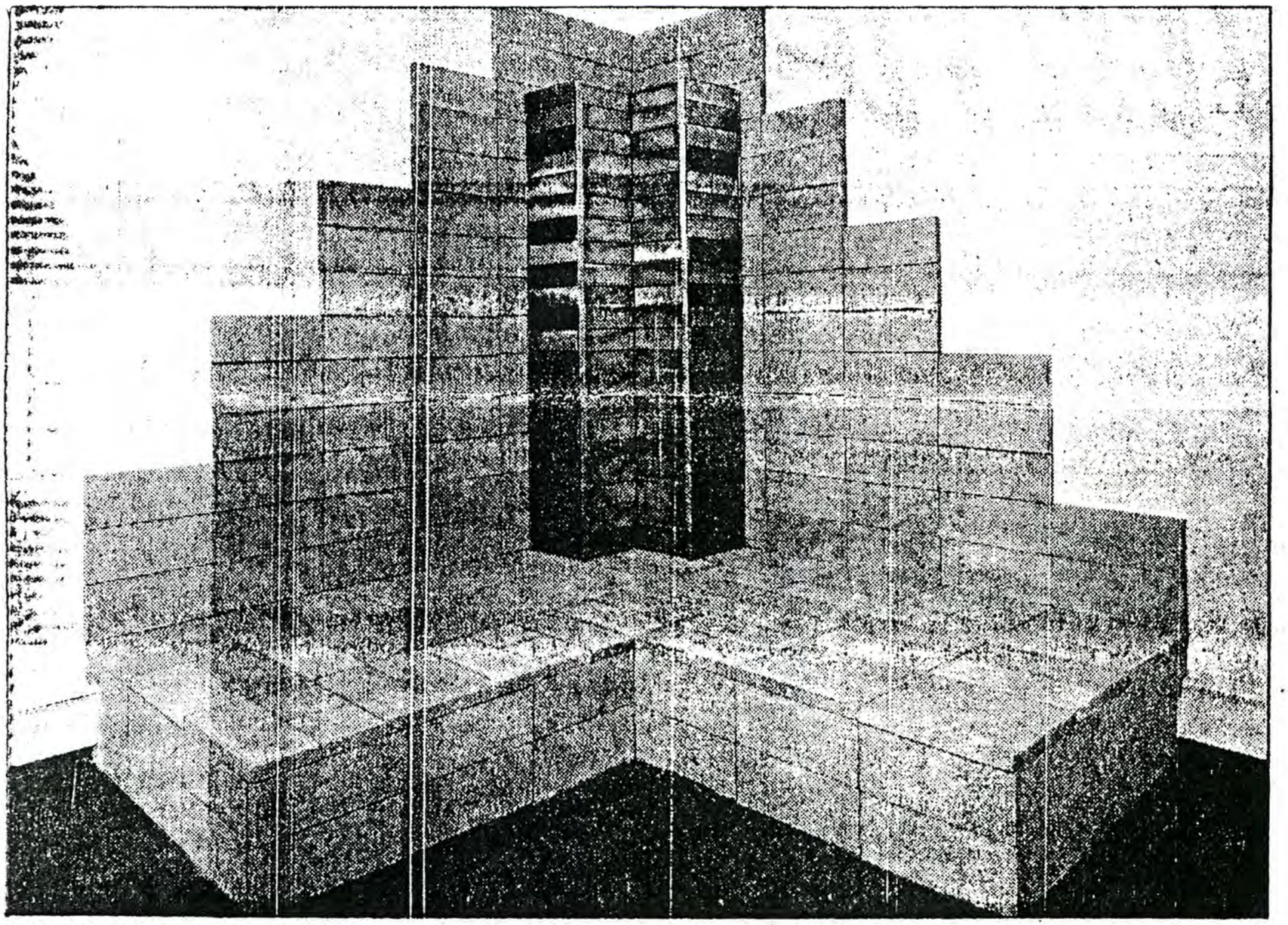
He cites the energy you create when you connect things in a novel way. The excitement of seeing a new relationship is like fuel to a vehicle. He points out Einstein's famous observation that "energy equals mass times the speed of light squared" as being comparable to recognizing "intellectual energy is as frozen and inaccessible as the energy locked in matter". n other words, a tiny bit of information can release enormous amounts of creativity and invention when we relate or connect it in another context and that nothing surpasses the human brain when it comes to making new connections.

The writer suggests the essence of genius "is the ability to see through things -- and see things through." The book is sprinkled with thought provoking quotations such as Pablo Picasso's "A painter takes the sun and makes it into a yellow spot. An artist takes a yellow spot and makes it into a sun."

Probably the most important message in this book is that just about everyone has the ability to think like a genius. The reason we fail to is that to live efficiently under normal social conditions we have acquired certain habits and patterns of thinking that get us through the daily routines quite well, but that also lull us into not questioning, not stopping to ask why, and not exploring the possibilities and benefits of doing things differently.

This is a delightful book to read and the unique sketches and drawings may well reach that visual and nonverbal half of your brain that modem research indicates is so important to both the artist and the inventor.

Page, Jo. "Siler tracks art in lair of mind". *Times Union* (Albany), August 15, 1993: H-2.



A "METAPHORM" representing the unseen, invisible work of the human mind, Todd Siler's "The Encoded Monolith" consists of 42 interlocking steel drawers, filled with the artist/scientist's drawings, paintings and investigations, and set on a base of graphite brick. The drawers of the left column represent Art; the drawers on the right are Science.

Siler tracks art in lair of mind

BY JO PAGE
Special to the Times Union

LENOX, MASS. — After a couple of hours of talking with artist Todd Siler, his choice of epigraph for his book "Breaking the Mind Barrier" is resplendently clear: "Discoveries are largely a function of the methods used." (Santiago Ramon y Cajal).

Siler is a discover and a pioneer in the neuropsychology of art. He is also — and he would accord this word the same level of distaste he does the word "anomaly" — a conundrum. Artists don't always know what to do with him. And he pushes the envelope of science pretty far. But he has made his bed in both disciplines at once; he is certain — and he is persuasive — that this will be for the benefit of all.

For the record, Siler is an artist who has exhibited widely in this country and abroad. His work is in many collections, among them the Guggenheim, Whitney, Metropolitan and Museum of Modern Art. Besides "Breaking the Mind Barrier," he is the author of "Metaphorming Minds" and "Cerebralism," and numerous articles dealing with the neuropsychology of art.

His recent work, including mixed-media paintings and several of his books, is featured in a solo exhibit at The Train Station in West Stockbridge. "Worlds of Metaphorms Metaphorming Worlds" includes a range of media illuminating Siler's convictions about the brain's process of connecting and transforming information and ideas.

But what does any of that mean? And how is this generative of art?

Siler offers no discrete separation between his enthusiastic scientific research, his commitment to art and the voraciousness of his curiosity about the brain.

So in order to talk about the ideas that fuel the art, it's necessary to talk a little about the person who fuels the ideas, Siler himself.

After earning an undergraduate degree in fine arts, Siler found he could no longer view as separate his commitment to both science and art. He'd always pursued both art and science as parallel — and distinct — enterprises, a view most of us hold and foster. But his studies at MIT (his Ph.D. is in Interdisciplinary Studies in Psychology and Art) took him farther into the exploration of the brain and its process of expression. And this inevitably affected both the kind of art he made and the method of inquiry he made into the brain.

He is clearly beguiled by the brain and how it works. And he is equally convinced that science, with its inquiry always guided by the study of a thing's physical structure, misses the key that unlocks much of how the brain functions. 'Processmorphology' is the name he uses to describe the study of the processes at work in like and unlike systems.

He explains the difference between a traditional scientific approach and processmorphologized approach, "It's not a comparison between the way things *look*, but the way things *work*."

He notes three illustrations of very unlike systems — a computer-aided contour map of the enormous star Betelgeuse, the conceptual foundation of the 9th century Borobudur temple in Java and a Zen Buddhist meditation symbol.

In terms of scale, culture, date and authority or origin, this star, temple and symbol could not be more different from one another. But there is a striking visual similarity among them. Siler sees this as evidence of the brain's timeless, transcultural processes at work.

This similarity is compelling for Siler because it seems to shed some light on the questions that drive his concerns in interdisciplinary research.

"All my work concerns two questions," he says, "how the mind is connected to nature and how the mind is connected to the things it creates."

What he configures both in his art and in his researchis a kind of intersecting process between the brain, its creation and the universe. "The brain really is what the brain creates," he affirms. This means that the boundaries between art, science, the mind and the universe are themselves merely constructs of the same kinds of brain processes. And it's these brain processes that Siler calls neurocosmology.

While "Breaking the Mind Barrier's" subtitle, "The Artscience of Neuropsychology" sounds staggeringly comprehensive, his introduction hints at the bare simplicity of the ideas that inform neurocosmology:

"The universe imparts its creative processes to us. We, in turn, impart our creative processes to the things we create. Our creations reveal the nature of our minds directly and so the universe indirectly. This is the great current of influences that change our lives in accord with the lifeful changes of the universe."

But what about art in general and Siler's art in particular? How does neurocosmology find expression in art?

It is chiefly in the essay "Cerebralism" that Siler wrote to accompany his exhibit at the Ronald Feldman Gallery earlier this year, that Siler begins to answer this question explicity. He sets forth how intimately, indeed inseparably, art and science are related. He boldly links the brain processes that created cubis

the brain processes of 20th century physicists; he links the brain processes of Symbolist artists and writers with ancient mathematicians Euclid and Archimedes.

This intersection between the disciplines is what he terms "cerebralism" and he quotes 19th century philosopher William James' description of Cerebralists as those who "combine the sensual and spiritual, the physical and the intellectual" in their creations.

Siler cites the peril of separating the creative experiences of people — whether artists or scientists, mathematicians or social activists — as that which leads to the schism between thinking and feeling. "Cerebralism," he writes, "seeks to rectify this situation by focusing on discovering our deepest connections with the world."

That's the nexus he explores in his art, always seeking "to find the medium that represents the ideas as closely as possible" even as he knows that exact visual representation is an elusive Grail.

His art makes explicit reference to both science and his own studies in neuropsychology. And he does use whatever medium best suits the idea.

There is much painting — dark, sweeping surfaces of color that cover large canvases or paper. Though not in the exhibit at The Train Station Siler often will overlap his paintings or create an installation that invites a viewer into a total environment that suggests the proceseses of the brain.

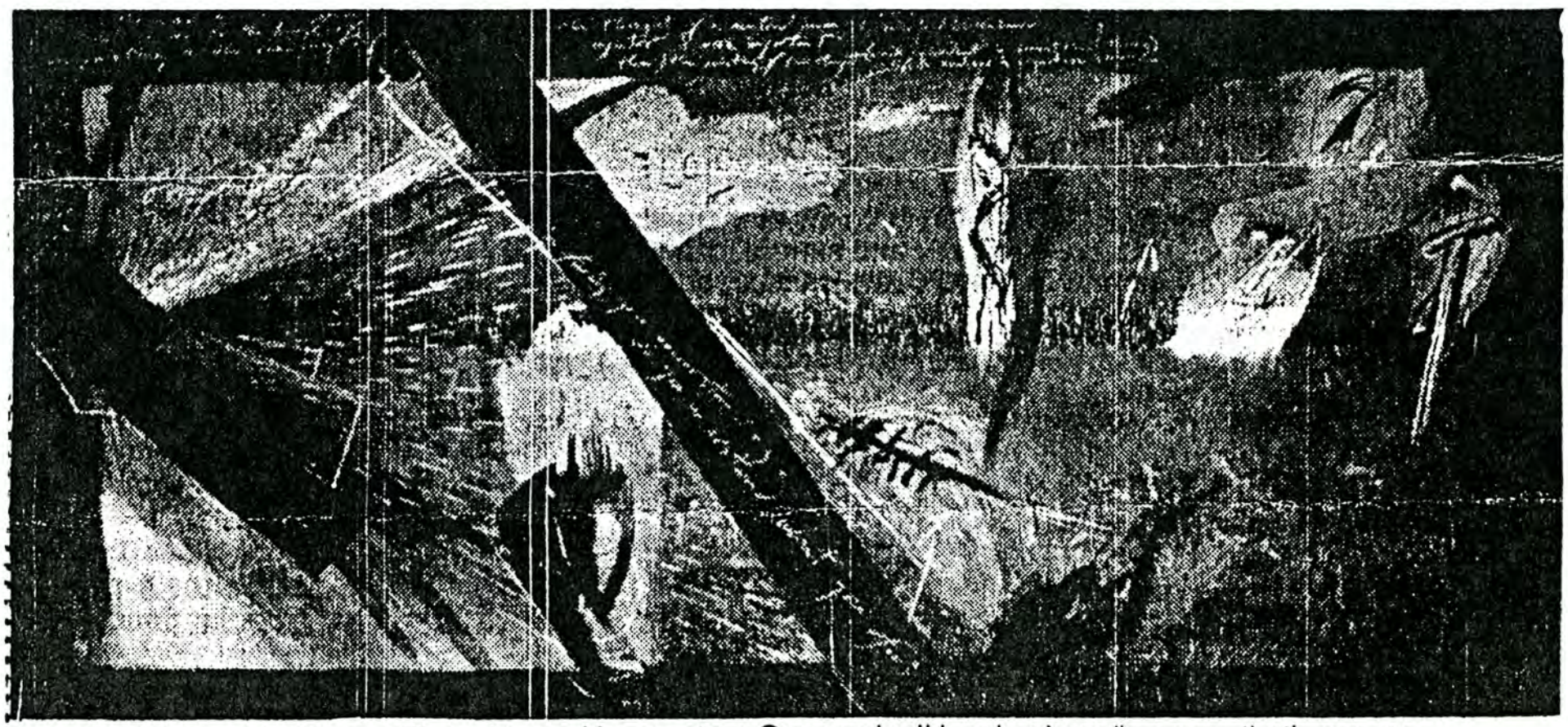
A series of icons features cross-sections of the brain and illustrates, through painted image, collage, printed and written text, various kinds of thought processes occurring within the brain. Another mixed media work, "A Mind Balancing Complementary Tendencies" poses the question "what are *we* that nature is not?"

It's such a deceptively simple question. Like the brain itself. Siler likens the fascination with the brain to diving into an endlessly deep quarry, only to discover that, quite apart from its unending depth, there is no way out.

Or he suggests a more playfully domestic image, "The brain puts out this beautiful, beautiful rug to invite you in. It's just the most beautiful mosaic of colors you've ever seen. And just as you get comfortable with it, it pulls the rug right out from under you. And you're back again out in the ether."

But clearly for Siler, falling through the space the brain creates is half the fun.

"Worlds of Metaphorms: Metaphorming Worlds" is at The Train Station in West Stockbridge.



SILER'S 10-foot-wide "Seven Thoughts on Humanature Converging" is mixed media on synthetic canvas.

McNally, Owen. "Tod Siler's Art is mindful of science". *The Hartford Courant*, March 6, 1991: C1-C2.

Todd Siler's art is mindful of science

By OWEN McNALLY
Courant Staff Writer

Just as Carl Sagan, the astronomer, author and great popularizer, has helped make the cosmos seem more accessible to laymen and experts, Todd Siler, a 37-year-old artist, scientist and writer, is helping to explicate the mysteries of the brain and the inner workings of the mind and the creative process.

For Siler, the first visual artist to earn a doctorate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the brain is a cosmos in its own right, a kind of "inner cosmos" with a fascinating extraterrestrial terrain all its own.

Just what this scientific chronicler of the brain and artistic depicter of thought processes is up to can be seen in "The Gravity of Ambiguity," an exhibition of his works that opens Friday and runs through April 4 at the University of Hartford's Joseloff Gallery.

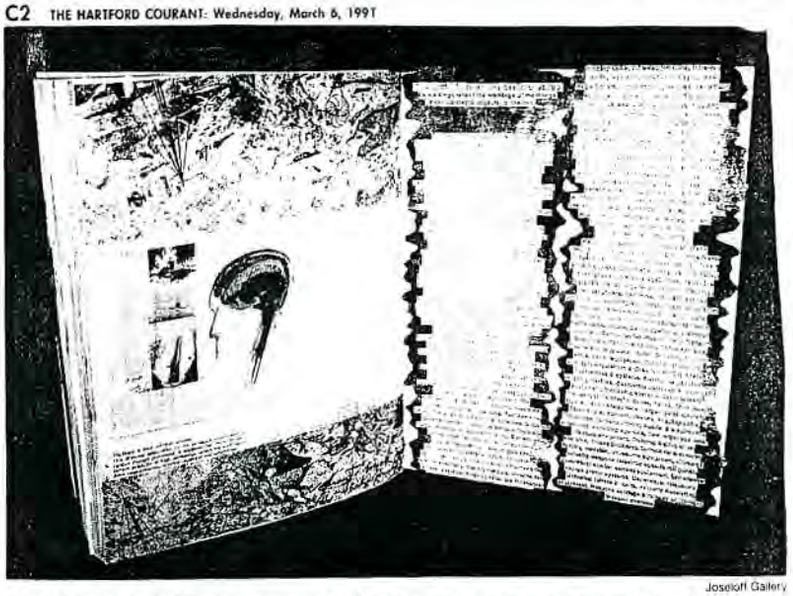
We live in a brain-centered world in which the key to creative thinking, whether in science or art, is the metaphor — that is, the ability to see similarities in seemingly unlike objects, Siler says in a telephone interview from his studio in Cambridge, Mass.

"In decoding the brain, we decode the universe, and

Please see In Siler's, Page C2

Joseloff Gallery

Todd Siler's "Creations of the Cerebral Cortex" (1988), is a mixed-media collage.



Joseloff Gallery

Todd Siler's "Book of Mental Imagery" (1983-87), a mixed-media collage on paper, is included in "The Gravity of Ambiguity," an exhibition of his works at the Joseloff Gallery.

In Siler's mind, art, science entwined

Continued from Page C1

vice versa. In many ways, the brain is what the brain creates," he writes in "Breaking the Mind Barrier" (Simon and Schuster, $24.95), his acclaimed new book detailing his scientific and philosophical principles dealing with the thinking process.

While the book provides the intellectual spine for his theories of the mind, Siler illustrates these same ideas in highly charged artworks that look like topographical views of the brain — brilliant portraits of neural activity and the fusioning and fissioning of thoughts.

It's as if Siler, tapping his extensive knowledge of the sciences and his artistic intuition, had stepped inside the brain to explore such regions as the thalamus or hypothalamus much as if he were a cosmonaut or, in this case, a cerebranaut.

The brain, in his cosmological view, is the center of the universe, and all things it has created are a reflection of it, including both good and evil.

"I really think that the '90s and the early 21st century are going to be devoted to the study of the brain," he says.

"Everything is filtered through the brain, even our emotions. When you say, 'Oh, I felt that in my heart,' you're really feeling it in your brain," he says.

Although Siler's book is packed with scientific references — references set in clear, explanatory rather than pedantic contexts — he loves poetic metaphors, or great leaps of the imagination that he calls "metaphorms."

He likes to show how seemingly unlike objects have similar processes, or what he calls "processmorphs."

Using this sort of thought process that finds unity among seemingly disparate elements, he shows the similarities between a neuron and a star, or between the brain and a nuclear reactor.

Metaphoric thinking like this can hit scientific or artistic pay dirt, sparking those miraculous flashes or epiphanies of creativity, he says.

"A rich metaphor can be a gold mine for hypotheses relating the properties of different systems," he writes in "Breaking the Mind Barrier."

"Such is the case of the German astronomer Johannes Kepler's concept of the 'music of the spheres' that helped the science of astronomy listen anew to its descriptions of the universe."

Kepler's unlikely seeming metaphor of the music of the spheres became an invaluable key that unlocked new thoughts and new approaches to old questions.

L. Barry Hetherington

Artist Todd Siler is author of "Breaking the Mind Barrier."

Siler knows that some patrons and even curators don't care for his mix of science and art and think of it as some form of intellectual miscegenation.

But in the days of Leonardo da Vinci, the great Renaissance artist and scientist, the visual arts and science went hand in hand, Siler says. Divorced long ago, they are today perceived as separate or even warring entities, or what Siler calls "cloistered fields" of knowledge.

For Siler, this is a stupid waste of potential

A cosmic approach

Why not use every field available when it comes to discovering as much as possible about the brain and its workings?

His pursuit of unraveling the complex enigmas of the mind isn't really at all arcane, he says.

It really is for everybody, he says, since we all have a head on our shoulders with a brain in it that in and of itself is as wondrous and infinitely complex as the cosmos.

Siler has lectured around the world, arguing that these superficial barriers should come tumbling down.

As an artist and scientist, his fundamental approach is to use all forms of knowledge and thinking when grappling with his subject, whether he's grappling on the printed page or on a canvas or over one of his large sculptural installations.

Although he has always been a voluminous reader, he is as passionate about the visual as he is the verbal.

"There is a place where words can go, and where they can't go," he says.

"Words have a kind of one-dimension to them. Images have a completely different dimension, or they extend the dimension of the words. I like going into those different dimensions," he says.

Painting is a way for him to make his words become flesh, to make them come alive among the explosively brilliant images he creates.

"The working of ideas in a tactile way is a completely different experience from the verbal. It allows the mind to walk past the terrain of logic and to enter into a very different space, very separate from words, even though words are part of that space and extend it in some way.

"Ultimately, the act of painting, or exploring in a visual way, allows the mind to go deeper in some sense.

"Images can transport you and lift you and do other kinds of things that I don't think the written language can quite do," he says.

Siler hopes that the readers of his book won't get turned off by any scientific terms but will keep going right on and pick up its general principles.

"This stuff I'm writing about is about you, the reader, not about some abstraction. And similarly, the paintings are about the viewer. Look at it and roll with it," he says.

Siler has been exhibiting his works at major museums for 10 years. He has published numerous articles and lectured throughout North America, the Middle East and the Near East on the history of the arts' interactions with science and technology.

His works are in numerous private and public collections, including the Guggenheim Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, all in New York City, and the Pushkin Fine Arts Museum in Moscow. He has received several prestigious fellowships, including a Fulbright to India in 1985-86.

As he has evangelized on behalf of an ecumenical link between art and science, he has encountered both enthusiastic and displeased curators, he says.

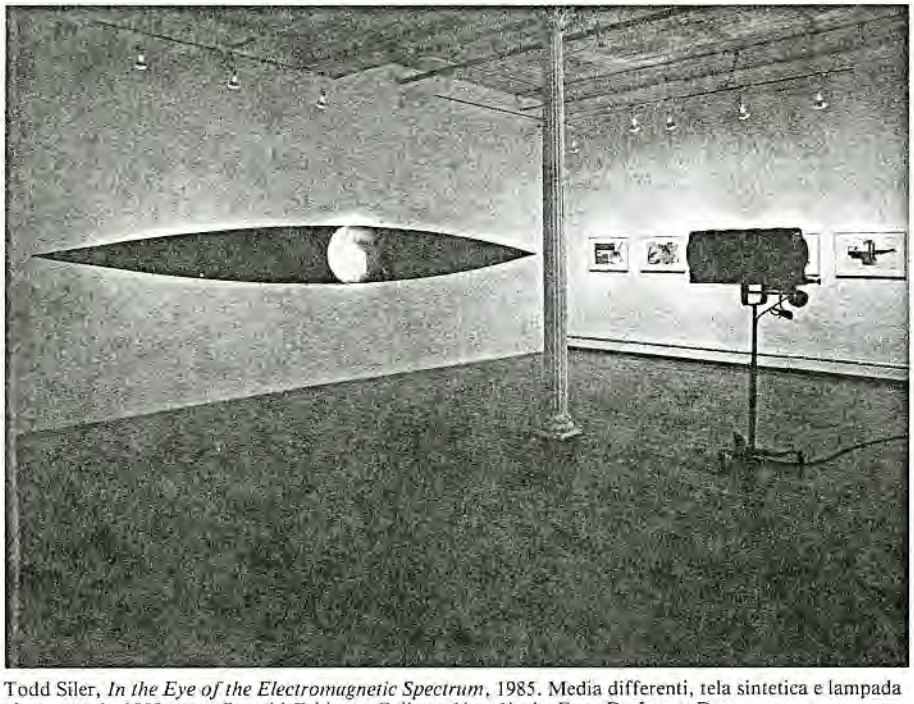
"The best curators are those who don't get hung up on the question of 'Is he an artist, or is he a scientist?' To that I say, 'Who cares!'

"Just look at the work, experience it and understand it on whatever level you want.

"Some curators get nervous because the artworks look at the processes of thinking. They are lazy intellectually. Bertrand Russell hit it right on the head when he said, 'People would rather die than think. And so they do.' "

"The Gravity of Ambiguity" opens Friday with a reception from 5 to 7 p.m. and runs through April 4 at the University of Hartford's Joseloff Gallery in the Harry Jack Gray Center, West Hartford. Zina Davis, the gallery director, is curator. The gallery is affiliated with the university's Hartford Art School. Hours: Monday to Friday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Saturday, noon to 4 p.m. Admission: free. Call: 243-4098.

Evans-Clark, Phillip. "Todd Siler - Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York". *Tema Celeste* (April - June 1987).



Todd Siler, *In the Eye of the Electromagnetic Spectrum*, 1985. Media differenti, tela sintetica e lampada al quarzo da 1000 watt. Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York. Foto D. James Dee.

Todd Siler

Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York

Il dio di solito collegato all'alchimia, cioè alla trasformazione, è Ermes. Egli presiede agli scambi di qualsiasi genere senza curarsi delle dottrine morali o filosofiche. È il faro che guida i filosofi e l'amico dei furfanti. Vent'anni fa, Michel Serres dedicò la sua opera piú importante al delicato e malizioso dio dai piedi alati. Per la prima volta, dopo molto tempo, la Scienza invocava la protezione di una figura mitologica e affidava il suo *telos* alla benevolenza di una forza simbolica che aveva un tempo presieduto alla sintesi intellettuale piú audace mai tentata: la fusione del pensiero greco con la dottrina cristiana. Dopo il fallimento dei modelli meccanicistici e positivisti, l'associazione tra Ermes (principio divino) e scienza (metodo di ricerca) è emersa come valida alternativa. Ermes è il dio della comunicazione che oggi coinvolge necessariamente sia una riflessione sulla scienza, sia una rivalutazione del simbolo all'interno della conoscenza. Siler, come Serres, è inebriato dai misteri della comunicazione.

Todd Siler tende un po' alla pinguedine ed è un rappresentante gioviale e loquace di quella classe di geni le cui peculiari abitudini mentali includono il desiderio, molto sentito, di visualizzare la genesi dell'intuizione e spiegare il problema della creazione. La grandiosità di questo progetto implicava un ottimo retroterra culturale che Siler aveva sia come artista sia come scienziato. Egli ha scelto di risolvere l'enigma della Sfinge da un punto di vista umanistico e tradizionale, cioè grazie ad una sintesi tra arti liberali (filosofia, psicologia, storia) e scienza (biologia, chimica, neurologia, fisica...). In altre parole, Siler non si limita a manipolare rappresentazioni archetipiche che possano far riferimento ad uno *status quo* epistemico o addirittura anticipare nuove forme cognitive, bensí sottopone la sua immaginazione al rituale rigoroso dell'investigazione scientifica. La sua arte si presta quindi a vari livelli di leggibilità. Dal punto di vista estetico, le sue opere possono inebriare i sensi per l'ampiezza delle loro proporzioni, per la grandiosità poetica dei loro soggetti, per i delicati contorni della loro coreografia astratta e la misteriosa natura del loro strano alfabeto visivo. Dal punto di vista semeiotico, esse suggeriscono un uso, quasi da virtuoso, della natura metaforica del segno iconico che fa continuamente oscillare il significato da un termine all'altro a livello di invocazione simbolica. E infine, a livello piú puramente filosofico, le sue opere appaiono come progetto di una ricerca, coerente e sistematica, delle radici del nostro essere. A quest'ultimo livello, esse conquistano improvvisamente il campo della speculazione pura e possono raggiungere una sorprendente capacità di penetrazione nel processo creativo.

Nella mostra di Siler alla galleria Ronald Feldman, intitolata *Psy-Phy: Hidden Territories*, sono esposte varie installazioni che si riferiscono tutte alla misteriosa connessione tra i pensieri e la loro rappresentazione mentre si manifestano al cervello. Per Siler, la struttura del cervello genera non solo sapere scientifico, ma, piú profondamente, intuizioni sulla natura umana. *Breaking the Mind Barrier: the Symmetries of Nature* è un'opera di grandi dimensioni nella quale un'alta colonna divide una grande tela in due superfici uguali ognuna delle quali misura sei metri. Ogni tre minuti, il crescendo di un suono vibrante avvia una luce stroboscopica bianca che colpisce il centro della colonna indicando cosí che un momento di creazione e un istante di distruzione si equivalgono. Il pannello destro raffigura un'immagine orizzontale a forma di arcata appuntita che si lascia dietro, su uno sfondo rosso, in cui si intrecciano gialli e arancioni fumosi, delle enormi curve nere, come anelli sparpagliati o spine di pesci cartilaginei. Questo quadro emana un'impressione di velocità vertiginosa, di precisione diabolica e di inesorabile *telos*; non è affatto sorprendente apprendere che questo "affresco" rappresenta il momento infinitesimale in cui un missile colpisce il suo bersaglio. È forse piú straordinario scoprire che per Siler questo momento di dolorosa bellezza coincide con quello in cui il cervello, con la stessa intensità e la stessa violenza, coglie e dà forma ad un'intuizione. La fusione che ne risulta indica un parallelo sconcertante tra un'immagine di distruzione e una di creazione.

Siler riempie inoltre le sue immagini di brevi frasi disegnate nervosamente che scompaiono viste da una certa distanza. Quando lo spettatore si avvicina alla tela, la dimensione linguistica si rivela e segnala un importante cambiamento nella relazione tra opera e spettatore. Mentre si viaggia all'interno dell'immagine cogliendo il significato da aforismi ermetici, si entra lentamente nella stessa mente di Siler e si abbandona la comoda posizione di disinteresse della percezione normale per essere trasformati in lettori e pensatori. Siler non è quindi solo un creatore di immagini, ma un teorico, un poeta e un sognatore. Siler, come Ermes, ama viaggiare per ogni dove: nelle scienze formali e applicate, nella letteratura, nell'arte e nelle difficili e delicate regioni dove queste si incontrano e si separano. La sua mente spasima per l'onniavvolgente. Guardando l'arte di Siler si ha l'impressione che, mentre il suo girovagare nei territori occulti si potrae, il Disegno sia piú coerente e appaia un'immagine globale, come una promessa sincera...

Phillip Evans-Clark

Traduzione di Giuseppina Carveni □

& Donohue are able to switch models of perception of their art. By using rigid conventional minimalist techniques, including a sharply reduced color palette, they guide our appreciation of the intentions of their work throughout its separate levels of meaning. The viewer is permitted to fiddle with the intentions of their work, acknowledged by the team when they state "...There is a certain pleasurable buoyancy involved in the activity of partaking in an object's self-prescribed (useless) purposefulness...".

Thus we are made aware of Wallace & Donohue's strong desire to create images which catch up with reality by making them stretch beyond stereotypes and categories. In this exhibition, they have built upon the disappointment of their personal discovery that artists are unable to control the meaning of their own work because of a kind of cultural mass vision which disrupts individualism, subjecting the self to an "undifferentiated plane of characterization". What these artists offer us is a way to press their work into the service of multiple contradictions, implicating ourselves, the user in the postmodern epoch, as a complicity factor. Without our willingness to be disorientated in this way, Wallace & Donohue's work would seem flat and cynical.

Jane Rankin-Reid

Todd Siler

Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York

The god usually associated with alchemy — that is, with transformation — is Hermes. He presides over all exchanges irrespective of their moral or philosophical tenets. He is the beacon of philosophers and the friend of train robbers. Twenty years ago, Michel Serres dedicated his major work to the light-footed, delicate and mischievous god. For the first time in a long while, Science invoked the protection of a mythological figure and entrusted its telos to the benevolence of a symbolic force which had once presided over the boldest intellectual synthesis ever attempted: the fusion of Greek thought with Christian doctrine. Ever since the bankruptcy of mechanistic and positivist models, the association between Hermes (a divine principle) and science (a method of inquiry) has emerged as a valid alternative. Hermes is the god of communication and communication today necessarily involves both a reflection on science and a re-evaluation of the role of the symbol within cognition. Siler, like Serres, is intoxicated with the mysteries of communication.

Todd Siler is a plump, jovial and garrulous member of the genius class whose peculiar mental habits involve a strong desire to visualize the genesis of intuition and elucidate the question of creation. The sheer magnitude of this project necessitated a sound background that Siler got both as an artist and as a scientist. He chose to tackle the Sphinx's riddle from a traditional humanistic point-of-view, i.e. by means of a synthesis between the liberal arts (philosophy, psychology, history) and sciences (biology, chemistry, neurology, physics...). In other words, Siler does not merely manipulate archetypical representations which may relate to a certain epistemic status-quo or even anticipate new cognitive forms, but submits his imagination to the precise ritual of scientific investigation. Hence, his art enjoys many levels of legibility. Aesthetically, his work can enrapture the senses by the expansiveness of its scale, the poetic awesomeness of its subject-matter, the delicate contours of its abstract choreography and the mysterious nature of its strange visual alphabet. Semiotically, it can read as a virtuoso use of the metaphoric nature of the iconic sign, constantly shifting meaning from one term to the next on the level of symbolic invocation. And finally, on a more purely philosophical level, his work may appear as the blueprint of a coherent and systematic search for the ontological roots of our being. On this last level, the work suddenly tips over in the field of pure speculation and can reach startling insights into the creative process.

His exhibition at the Ronald Feldman Gallery, entitled: *Psy-Phy: Hidden Territories*, consisted of varied installations all pertaining to the mysterious connection between thoughts and their representation as they occur in the brain. For Siler, the structure of the brain not only yields techno-scientific knowledge but, more profoundly, insights about human nature. *Breaking the Mind Barrier: the Symmetries of Nature* is a big work in which a tall column divides a large stretch of canvas in two equal surfaces each measuring 6 meters. Every three minutes, the crescendo of a pulsating sound triggers a stroboscopic white light which hits the center of the column, thus signalling the equivalence of a moment of creation and an instant of destruction. The right panel represents a horizontal form shaped like a pointed arch leaving behind it, on a red background laced with smoky yellows and oranges, huge black curves, like shattered rings or gristly fish bones. An impression of vertiginous speed, of diabolical precision and of inexorable telos emanates from this painting and we are only half-surprised to learn that this "fresco" represents the infinitesimal moment of impact of a missile on its target. We may be more astonished perhaps by the correspondence that Siler implies between this moment of a painful beauty and the one when the brain, with the same intensity, the same violence, grabs and shapes an intuition. The resulting conflation indicates a disconcerting parallel between an image of destruction and one of creation.

In addition, Siler fills his images with nervously drawn, concise sentences which disappear at a distance. Conversely, when the viewer approaches the canvas, the linguistic dimension reveals itself and also signals an important change in the relationship between the work and the spectator. As one journeys into the image picking up meaning from cryptic aphorisms, one slowly enters Siler's own mind, and abandons the comfortable disinterested posture of normal perception to become a reader and a thinker. Siler is therefore not simply an image-maker, but a theoretician, a poet and a dreamer. Siler, like Hermes, enjoys travelling everywhere: in formal and applied sciences, in literature, in art and in the difficult and delicate regions where they all connect or separate. His mind longs for the all-encompassing. Looking at Siler's art we get the impression that, as his wandering among the hidden territories lingers, the Drawing is more coherent and a global image appears, like an open promise....

Phillip Evans-Clark

Annas, Teresa. "Small Chrysler exhibit large on symbolism". *Virginian Pilot and Ledger Star*, February 9, 1984.

Small Chrysler exhibit large on symbolism

By TERESA ANNAS
Special to The Daily Breeze

Dark, avenging angels with Woody Woodpecker heads. A Tower of Babel made up of television sets ruled over by ancient Mayan gods. Charts and diagrams of the brain beneath thin, hairy veils.

How do you make sense of these enigmatic images — some of them funny, some of them serious? And they are all contained in one energized room, the first floor changing gallery at The Chrysler Museum. The show is "The Year One (1984-2001)," the least trumpeted of three exhibits that opened Friday at the Norfolk museum. Yet, when compared with the concurrent shows on 1950s wearables and fashion photography, it certainly emerges as the most important.

For such a small show, "The Year One" is big on ideas. There are only five artists represented, if you count the "odd couple" conceptualists Gilbert and George as one.

Review

— only Todd Siler, a brilliant pioneer in the merging of art and science, shows more than one piece. The works are few, but very large in scale.

"The Year One" offers an introduction to what could be called the New Futurists. Not so much in terms of the Futurist movement of the 1910s, although they do share with that group an intense interest in reflecting contemporary life. But more in terms of a forward-looking attitude.

The other artists in the show are graffiti king Keith Haring, second generation Pop artist Ronnie Cutrone and Jack Goldstein, who specializes in theatrical transformations via art.

When curator Thomas W. Sokolowski began to formulate the exhibit a few months ago, he knew he wanted to refer to the implications of 1984 in some way. But not, for instance, like the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C., which recently mounted "Dreams and Nightmares: Utopian Visions in Modern Art" to show the transformation of the utopian ideals in art from the first half of this century into the "dystopian" cynicism of a post-World War II generation.

The parenthetical dates in the show's title reflect Sokolowski's interest in looking ahead to the next benchmark of time created by a piece of literature, Arthur C. Clarke's "2001: A Space Odyssey." Orwell prophesied man's downfall, while Clarke envisioned a mystical union of man and technology that contains some hope.

"Death Faith" a 1982 photo piece of 30 panels.

Sokolowski conceived of the exhibit, even as small as it is, in two parts. There's Siler, and then there's everybody else.

Everybody else includes Haring and Cutrone, a complementary team for homage and sarcasm. Both use an accessible, popular art style, such as the cartoon. And both create works that are much more complex than you might realize at a glance.

Cutrone's point of departure is the religious icon. His painting on canvas dropcloth, "The Dead in Christ in Space" (1983) contains Jesus Christ, an archangel and even a seven-headed beast straight from the Book of Revelations.

Christ (donning a halo that looks more like a steering wheel) has just slain a skeleton in an astronaut's suit. And the dark angel bears the head of Woody Woodpecker — you can almost hear his cackle. It's a nightmarish image from a serious student of the Bible, and not so blasphemous as it looks.

Cutrone doesn't see much difference between an archangel and Woody Woodpecker: they're both cartoons to him. Bible stories and cartoons always pit good against evil. The Manhattan artist likes to reprogram each genre in a macabre merger that "means something." His main intention is to express a sense of humor about "all the sacred cows" of religion, money and power.

Haring's background is underground in subways. The best-known of the recent batch of graffiti artists, Haring was discovered through his simple cartoons in white chalk drawn on black canceled advertising panels throughout the New York subway system.

In such storytelling company, Goldstein's huge emblematic image of an eclipse seems out of place. The untitled airbrush painting depicts a massive orb with firey light spilling from the edges of the black circle.

Goldstein also has been involved in performance and film making. His films focused on ordinary objects through a single, sustained shot, eliciting an hypnotic effect.

The painting is similarly theatrical. A natural spectacle — in this case, an eclipse — seems supernatural. Like the birth of a new planet.

More than half the room is taken over by Siler. Huge mixed media montages on paper and canvas line the walls. Three-dimensional constructions are propped on pedestals.

Siler has pursued his interests in science and art with equal fervor. He is a research fellow at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at the Maryland Institute of Technology, and his studies have centered on the human brain and its relationship to the universe and creativity.

Among his sculptural constructions are upright "bookforms," consisting of layers of imagery between plexiglass. On one of these, Siler scrawled theories and questions like, "Is the brain a kind of star, an energy burning 'Star of Consciousness,' whose systems have a dynamic resemblance to the fusion and fission processes that form and shape our universe?"

He also queries the possibility of "a merging of brain functions ('cerebral fusion') at the instant of intuition and a splitting of these functions ('cerebral fission') in moments of analytical reasoning and self-expression."

Siler believes that intuition and perception require both art and science, and he strives to merge the two in his art.

His 1981-82 mural-scale "Thought Assemblies" contains gridded and gestural atmospheric areas. Scientific diagrams and verbage are collaged to the surface, juxtaposed with gestural sections.

A fast and fluent draftsman, Haring is sometimes characterized as a media artist. Like Cutrone, he merges contemporary images with ancient ones to create a new meaning.

In his huge untitled black ink drawing on paper, the artist has his angular, generic humans building a pyramid of television sets, each with a red "X" over the screen. Two grotesque Mayan gods tower on each side of the pyramid. Their arms reach over the rising mass, their fingers about to touch in a clear and comical reference to Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam." In the early 16th century work, God is passing the divine spark to Adam through his fingertip. Mankind is born.

In Haring's version, even as the divine spark is transferred, the humans are already building their Tower of Babel, a contemporary one of mass media. The television eye is X'd out, blinded.

Haring's rendering style is so playful that it's hard to perceive such a message as dead serious.

It's even more difficult to know how to look at Gilbert and George's giant "photopiece" called "Death Faith." Among the earliest of the performance artists, Gilbert Proesch and George Passmore are more popular in Europe than America, although their upcoming spring show at the Baltimore Museum of Art, which will travel the country, should heighten their recognition here.

Bob Trotter reviews Carlton Abbott's one-man exhibition, Page G15.

"Death Faith" consists of 30 photo panels, individually framed and arranged in a gridded square. Standing before the massive work gives you the sensation of lying down with fragments of monuments towering over you. Sokolowski suggests that these are images seen from the grave.

Gilbert and George are best known for their live performances — wearing ill-fitting suits, looking nerdish and engaged in bizarre, repetitive activity. Their 1981 sixty-nineminute color film, "The World of Gilbert and George," will be shown at The Chrysler Museum theater Wednesday night at 7:30. (The event is free.)

Siler's blending of disciplines seems more effective in a recent "Thought Assembly" on view, where the merger of the two ideas has fewer seams. The newer work actually turns a corner in the room. It reads from left to right, moving in a light to dark transformation. Two whirling orbs meet at the corner and seem about to unite.

Charts and scientific writings are barely visible beneath carefully applied layers of filmy material that looks like angel hair. With this work, the viewer is both pulled forward to examine the surface, which looks like body tissue in places, and pulled back to sense the furious explosion of movement.

Siler's installation requires a lot of time for examination. But there is reward in studying the thought-provoking touches that would be easy to overlook, like the tiny collaged bit of copy: "When I think about how electron spins have something to do with how I think and this thinking influences spinning electrons. . . ."

"The Year One (1984-2001)" continues through March 18 at The Chrysler Museum, Olney Road and Mowbray Arch, Norfolk. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays, 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays. Admission is free.