



February, 1994

Volume Two, Number One

SACRED ART / TECHNOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

by Bret Battey

...the broad effect of this [digital] revolution is to bring many things much closer than they have been since the industrial revolution made specialists of us all: idea and realization, producer and client, creation and revision, word/ image/ sound/ movement. In short, digital technology is no respecter of existing boundaries, whether spatial, temporal, conceptual or professional. Similarly, "primitive" cultures, whether ancient or contemporary, see no need to distinguish between art, science, and religion when considering an act, a thought, or an object. In their view, these are all aspects of a common meaning (Eric Martin in Greiman 1990).

For the leaders of the digital revolution, the term "synthesis" is familiar in reference to the use of digital technology to create sounds and images. But the technological synthesis we have begun to utilize in expressive media is becoming the catalyst for a synthesis of a more profound nature. From multimedia to interactivity to world-wired culture, we are

CyberArtist

seeing the convergence of Western culture's spiritual malaise with the destructive and constructive potentials of new expressive technologies—a set of tensions and shifts that promise to extend and resolve through our cultural systems in shock waves.

The integration of art and technology will be riding the crest of these waves. This is because art is driven by synthesis—not digital synthesis, but the synthesis of life experience—the fundamental force in both cultural and individual development.

Hegel, a 19th century philosopher absorbed with historical processes, is perhaps most responsible for bringing the idea of synthesis and "dialectical" analysis to bear on the study of history. Dialectic refers the interaction of opposites. In Hegel's "triadic dialectic", an extreme force or idea in a culture ("thesis") can stimulate a contradictory force or idea ("antithesis"). This conflict becomes the basis for growth and change, and the outcome is a "synthesis", a new state for the culture which becomes the basis for the next triad of conflict and resolution.

One critique of dialectic is that synthesis of metal/flesh or moving/not-moving is not very helpful when one is about to be hit by a truck.

Indeed, it would not be helpful to my argument to even suggest that there is some kind of synthesis to be found between dead and not dead. However, in the realm of human values and culture, people live every day actively engaged in a balancing act between dualisms such as self/group, norms/relativism, externalizing/internalizing, tradition/innovation, and creativity/critique. In this light, synthesis is the ongoing process of adjusting the balance between irreconcilable forces in an individual and a culture. In this definition, dialectic is not necessarily an evolutionary paradigm; change must occur simply to

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**FEBRUARY MEETING:
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7**

**THE ART INSTITUTE
OF SEATTLE
ROOM 717/718
2323 ELLIOT AVENUE
7:30PM**

**FEBRUARY'S GUEST:
-- HAL MORRIS --
QUESTIONS OF
AUTHENTICITY IN THE
ARTIST'S USE OF
HIGH-TECHNOLOGY
(SEE FOCUS - PAGE 7)**

**IN MARCH:
PIERRE DE VRIES
PROGRAM MANAGER
OF FUTURE HOME
TECHNOLOGY --
MICROSOFT**

PUBLISHER'S CORNER

by Steve Turnidge

Welcome to the second year of the Northwest CyberArtist (now 8 pages)! Wow! The opportunities presenting themselves to us as a group are astounding!

We are starting a new feature this month — the collaboration page. This moves us closer to an original stated goal within our group: connection between individual artists. In the near term, look here for ideas for *Beyond*

COLLABORATION PAGE

I intend to build a musical fountain for the BFF show. I hope to be able to install it in the existing fountain well by the staircase in the Center House. If this is not feasible, a temporary catch basin can be constructed nearly anywhere. This will be a device with approximately 36 nozzles and 16 sets of lights (colored lights and strobes), all responding to MIDI note on, note off, and velocity parameters.

This fountain can be controlled by any device that can send MIDI signals, including sequencers, keyboards and other MIDI controllers (traditional or not), or it can be controlled by sound relays (i.e. non-MIDI music or noises), motion sensors, or anything else that can be made to switch 12-volts DC.

I think this will be an opportunity to install a show-stopping interactive feature that will be a great deal of fun. The fountain will be able to "play" from preprogrammed sequences (synchronized to audio) and/or interact with audience and/or live music input. (Or all of the above, simultaneously!)

Fast Forward with an April 1 proposal deadline, and the *Seattle Center Coliseum* project (see page 4) with a March 1 proposal deadline.

This will be a good place to present and seek ideas. We have CyberArtists with grand plans; and many others with supportive strengths and talents.

Another excellent method to find collaborators (in addition to publication in the newsletter) is to attend the monthly meetings. (*Especially* this next one on February 7!) The cross-section of creative people who attend are an amazing resource.

I would welcome collaboration in the following areas:

Electronic Control: Conversion of MIDI signals for controlling the fountain. Synchronization of tape (audio) and MIDI signals.

Metal Work: to include light aluminum, brass, and copper fabrication, and miscellaneous plumbing.

Sound System: Amplifier/speaker system suitable to the space (Center House) for playing recorded music along with microphone capability so a facilitator can explain to the audience how the interactive systems work.

MIDI Input Devices (Industrial Strength): suitable for audience participation. Conversion of motion and/or sound into MIDI signals.

Musicians (or groups) who are interested in performing on/with a really different sort of instrument. Playing the fountain can best be described as a cross between a drum machine, calliope, and fireworks display.

If interested in working on the project, call **Mike Storie at (206) 324-8768.**



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RANE

I am a classically trained Bassoon player, and have great interest in ethnic music (especially East Indian). My computer skills include Corel Draw 4.0, and 3D Studio. However, I am willing to work on any project or area. Thanks and SYSOON [see ya' soon]: Dan Ciranny

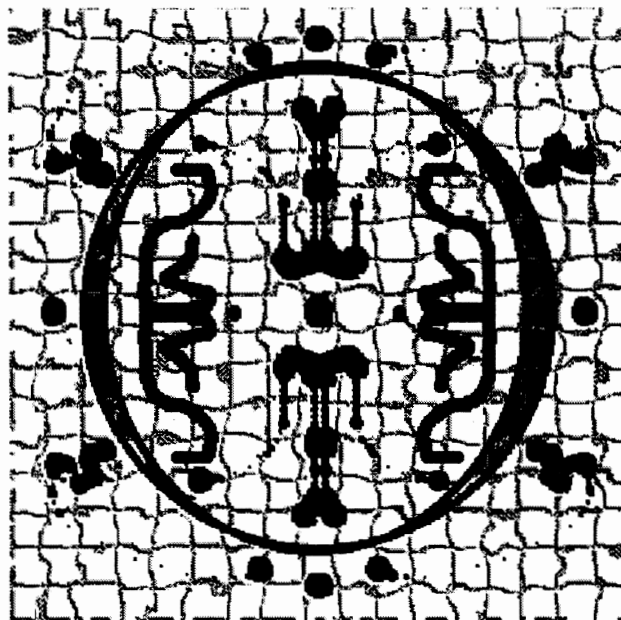
maintain balance. However, if we achieve a higher level change—that is, we change in such a way that we are subsequently capable of more effective change—that would be evolutionary.

An entire culture may be prepared for a shift—primed with an unbalance requiring new resolution—but often it is a few individuals who, in engaging this unbalance directly, become primary agents in leading a transition to a new synthesis. Artists are a prime example. It is in this light that one can say that suffering is the required pre-condition of an artistry that has significance: the artist of integrity must be willing to face the pain of an internal conflict—between a thesis and an antithesis—and try to craft a resolution to that conflict through expressive synthesis. At best, this activity in turn encourages the process of synthesis required of the whole culture.

One of the dualisms that any society must balance is that of rationality versus irrationality. In broad terms, the bulk of human history has been steeped in a *thesis* of irrationality. The ills of this extreme were followed by a dominant *antithesis* of rationality (industrial culture). Faced now with the proven ills of both extremes, the crisis of our time is the crafting of a new resolution to these seemingly conflicting forces.

Rationalism and analysis, wonderful tools that they are, are what allow us to identify this problem. However, in a beautiful example of dialectic,

rationalism and analysis prove incapable in themselves of solving the problem so identified and, indeed, prove that irrationalism is a necessary part of the solution!



What am I saying? Consider this quote from Jung:

The things that come to light brutally in insanity remain hidden in the background in neurosis, but they continue to influence the consciousness nevertheless... it is therefore necessary to integrate the unconscious into consciousness. [This requires] a dialectical procedure, a real coming to terms with them... 'an inner colloquy with one's good angel.' (Jung 1934)

Jung encouraged his patients to engage in painting, drawing, and other free creativity as an integral part of the therapeutic process. Often a patient's drawings contained patterns and symbols that revealed the patient's inner conflicts. In the process of making these conflicts conscious through creativity, the patients were better able to resolve these conflicts. In other words, resolution of the patient's inner conflict was an intuitive dialectic

cal process rather than a reasoned process. It is not the truth that sets you free, it is the experience of the truth that sets you free.

Jung's process relied on symbols. Symbols are metaphorical in function. Metaphors are irrational. One of the primary tenets of logic is that metaphor is not a valid form of argument. How does one program a metaphor?

That the resolution of an inner conflict *cannot* necessarily be analyzed, that it is not rational, that it might not be representable in a computer program, that it cannot be prescribed like a vaccination, is a hard thing to accept for those of us whose mind-set values control, eschews unpredictability and vulnerability, finds beauty in the structure of a computer program, and accepts that time is well spent trying to create artificial intelligence with strictly procedural programming methods.

Yet it is among these people that we begin see an outpouring of interest in such things as techno-shamanism, high-tech hallucinogenics, ritualistic experience, and cultures that do not self-objectivize. The force of dialectic reveals itself again. Research into chaos, dynamic systems, cybernetics, self-adaptive systems, cellular automata, and neural nets is leading to a realization that the richest results from the computing environment come from structures that we cannot predict and control—structures instead that must work through a process, learn, and evolve.

Religion was (and I use the past tense fully intentionally) the primary mediator between the conscious and

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the unconscious, between the rational and the irrational, in the bulk of 'civilized' human history. When functioning correctly, it affirmed the need to resolve inner conflicts and balance societal forces and did so through a vocabulary of ritual, symbol, and sacredness. Such sacredness is among the first victims of the analytic mind-set. Critique, analysis, and conscious design belong to the realm of the rational. As such they desacrilize—remove the power of—processes that evolved to mediate with the irrational (Bateson 1987). Displacing religious sensibilities, the marketing analysis dictates our cultural destiny. We are left with sitcoms as our primary means of spiritual mediation.

So at this point in history, reason tells us that we need to resolve conflicts that do not necessarily have rational resolutions, while the traditional means of attaining those resolutions have been stripped of their power by our own rationality! We need processes that we can use to re-balance the active dualisms in our selves and our culture. For many, the banquet-style appropriation of existing spiritualities in the New Age movement does not escape the malaise of spiritual death through objectification; it simply verifies our emptiness because it relativizes all spirituality and makes it all equally meaningless. One must evolve a synthesis—it is experiential rather than objectifiable. By definition, if you construct something and designate it as sacred, it will not function as something sacred.

What is our solution? It would be appropriate to expect, given the dialectical pattern, for the tools of ra-

SEATTLE COLISEUM RENOVATION ART PROJECT PROSPECTUS

Introduction

The Seattle Arts Commission and the Seattle Center are seeking two artists or artist teams to produce artworks for the Seattle Center Coliseum, which is undergoing a major renovation in 1994-1995. Art will play a key role in the complete redesign of this facility, the rehabilitation of which will be Seattle's largest city financed construction project. Visual artist Vicki Scuri has completed work with the architects, landscape architects and other design professionals to identify art sites in the renovated building. Renovation of the Coliseum was approved by the Seattle City Council in May, 1993; design development has been completed. *Work on the Coliseum is on a "fast-track" schedule; the project, including all artwork components, must be completed by October 1995.*

Background

The Seattle Center, site of the 1962 World's Fair, is home to performing arts groups, festivals, exhibitions, conventions, conferences, and is the largest single tourist destination in Washington State.

In early 1993, the Seattle City Council approved a budget to renovate the Seattle Center Coliseum, based on review of schematic design for the new facility. One percent (1%) of the capital construction budget has been allocated for the commission of artwork related to the site.

The Seattle Center Coliseum is home to the Seattle SuperSonics NBA Basketball team and the Thunderbirds ice hockey team. It is a venue for concerts, family shows, and conventions. The coliseum Redevelopment Project will completely rebuild the existing building into a state-of-the-art arena. The interior of the building will be gutted and excavated 35 feet to add extra seating and to provide uninterrupted views of the event floor. The new Coliseum will have seating for 17,000+, including 58 suites and 1,150 club seats. New audio and video systems will be added. The distinctive existing exterior form of the Coliseum will remain; the trusses, buttresses, concrete edge beams and glass curtain wall will be retained. The adjacent site and plazas will be landscaped and upgraded.

In the summer of 1993, the Seattle Arts Commission, after a national competition, contracted artist Vicki Scuri to work with the renovation designers to develop an art plan for, and to locate art sites in, the Coliseum. The artist and architects determined that lighting is an important aspect of the building, and identified the east and west entries and interior entry walls as locations at which light-based artworks — including video, holography, fiber-optic, laser, neon and others — might be created. Ms. Scuri will be commissioned to work on the east and west exterior plazas leading to these sites.

In addition, there are several other projects on the Seattle Center involving artists; of immediate impact on the Coliseum is the renovation of the International Fountain and surrounding area to the east, on which a design team of artist Gloria Bornstein, Ned Kahn, Timothy Siciliano, and Horace Washington, and landscape architect Kenichi Nakano, are working.

Scope of Project

The Seattle Arts Commission will commission two artists of artist teams. Each will produce a permanent artwork, one at the east entry to the Coliseum, and one at the west entry. Each site, located just inside of these two entryways will be a wall 16' high and 30' long facing the doors; however, the lobby spaces/entryways will be considered part of the site as well. The artists will be strongly encouraged to produce artworks which include light.

Six artists or artist teams will be selected as finalists and commissioned to develop detailed artwork proposals. (*See Selection Process below.*)

The two commissioned artists or artist teams will be asked to meet and coordinate their work with the other artist, the architect and design professionals for the Coliseum project. In addition, the artist selected to work on the east entry should meet and share information with the design team artists for the International Fountain.

All artwork and technical specifications will be subject to review by the Seattle Arts Commission and Seattle Center. Meetings with these groups will be expected.

Budget

\$2,500 (all costs inclusive) will be paid to each of six finalists (or finalist teams) to develop a detailed artwork proposal.



image by Geoff Kaimmer

\$175,000 will be awarded to each of two different artists (or artist teams) for the creation of an artwork at one of the two entries.

One artist may not receive both commissions.

Eligibility

Professional artists working in all media are eligible to apply. However artists with experience in environmental, lighting, and technological media are especially encouraged to apply. Applications will be accepted from individual artists or artist teams. The selected artists must be available to spend periods of time in Seattle through-

out the project to coordinate their artwork with the ongoing construction of the Coliseum.

Prior experience with collaborations is not required. However, artists must demonstrate their ability to communicate their ideas succinctly and to work collaboratively with a wide variety of people.

As of January 1993, artists may not receive more than two commissions from Seattle Arts Commission Public Art Program within a five year period or receive any commission within two consecutive years.

Translation assistance of this prospectus in several languages is available. Please call Marcia Iwasaki at 684-7171.

Workshop

A workshop for applicants will be held on February 14, 1994 at 2:00 PM in the Coliseum (west entry at 1st Avenue North and Harrison Street). The workshop will include a tour of the Coliseum and a presentation by Vicki Scuri. Copies of Vicki Scuri's art plan will be available for viewing at the Seattle Arts Commission. For sign-up and further information call the Public Art Program at 684-7171 and specify "Coliseum Renovation Project."

Selection Process

The selection process will take place in two parts:

- In March 1994, a three-member selection panel (with panel advisors including project architects, Seattle Center staff and community members) will review applicants' slides and other material. The panel will identify up to six finalists to prepare proposals

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for the project. Each of the finalists will be commissioned for \$2500, all inclusive, to prepare proposals including drawings, models, technical specifications and budgets. The proposals will be due *April 29, 1994*.

- The panel will reconvene in May to review the proposals, and to recommend two artists to be commissioned for the project. The proposals will be reviewed on the bases of concept, artistic merit, feasibility, completeness of budget and document and overall compatibility with the Coliseum and Seattle Center. The recommendation of selected artists must be reviewed by the Seattle Arts Commission before the action is official. Please do not call the Seattle Arts Commission office to ask the names of the panel's recommendations. The names of the selected artists will be made public following the June, 1994 meeting of the Seattle Arts Commission.

Selection Panel

A peer panel of arts professionals.

Materials to be Submitted

1. Slides and/or a videotape.

If submitting slides, please include:

- **Fifteen (15) 35mm slides** of recent work. All slides must be labeled with artist's name, a number corresponding to the number on the slide identification sheet, and an indication of the top of the slide (**NOTE:** Each applicant's slides will be projected five at a time during the selection process). Larger transparencies and prints will not be considered.
- A completed **slide identification sheet** (included with actual prospectus — call (206) 684-7171 and request a "Seattle Center Coliseum" prospectus).

If submitting video, please include:

- **One ½" VHS videotape.** The panel will review up to five (5) minutes of tape per applicant. Please clearly mark outside of tape with your name and title(s)

of work(s), and cue tape to a segment you wish the panel to view.

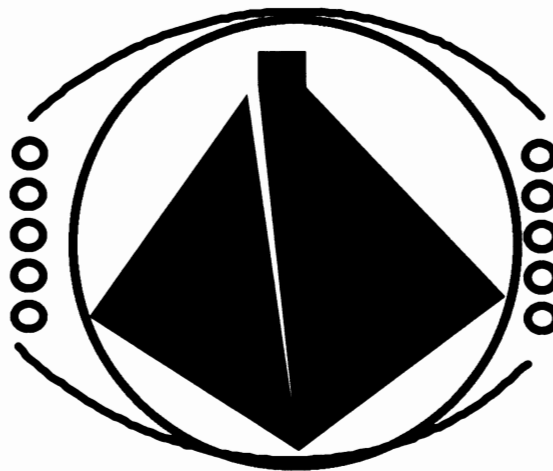
- **A brief written description** (not to exceed one page) of the video.
2. A current **resume**.
 3. A brief **letter of interest** (not exceeding two pages), including a brief statement about your artwork, and a description of any related experience.
 4. **Return envelope and postage (stamps only)**, unless materials are to be picked up.

Optional:

Up to three examples of written reports, illustrative drawings, plans or sketches, reflecting experience in large scale commissions.

PLEASE WRITE "COLISEUM PROJECT" ON SUBMITTAL ENVELOPE

Every effort will be made to insure the safe handling of submittal materials; however, the Seattle Arts Commission will not be responsible for any loss or damage.



Deadline

Materials must be *received* in the Seattle Arts Commission office by March 1, 1994. (*Postmarks not acceptable.*)

Please do not call the Seattle Arts Commission office to ask about the

panel's recommendations. Artists will receive notification of the panel's decision by letter, after which materials may be picked up in person. Materials accompanied by return envelope with *sufficient postage* will be returned by mail.

If you have questions after reading this prospectus, please call the Seattle Arts Commission at (206) 684-7171, and specify the "Coliseum Renovation Project."

ADDRESS:

Seattle Arts Commission
312 1st Avenue North, 2nd Floor
Seattle, WA 98109
(206) 684-7171

Business License/State tax number

All individual artists who are contracted to receive money for commissioned projects from the Seattle Arts Commission are required to have a valid City of Seattle business license. However, **YOU DO NOT NEED A BUSINESS LICENSE TO ENTER COMPETITIONS.** The business license cost is \$65 annually. For further information of business licenses, and to receive an application form, please call the Seattle Department of Licenses and Consumer Affairs at (206) 684-8484.

Commissioned artists from Washington State will also need to apply for a Washington State tax number, if they do not currently have one. For further information, call the Washington Department of Revenue at (206) 464-6827.

FEBRUARY GUEST SPEAKER FOCUS: HAL MORRIS

"BET THAT'D SOUND GREAT IF YOU PLAYED IT ON REAL INSTRUMENTS!"

By Hal Morris

A new generation of affordable electronic gear has given musicians and artists unprecedented new powers over their media. But if you sell your car to buy that gear, and give up your "normal" job to have the time to devote intensive years to fulfilling your creative drives, you may be disappointed to find there are people who will look upon your high-tech art products with suspicion.

For example, if you get some sophisticated keyboard equipment, pour dozens of hours into just learning how the gizmo works, and hundreds more actually composing on it, your end product may be met with the deflating remark, "Gee, that is a nice **machine** you've got!"

Or, from more charitable listeners you might get "Gee, I bet that'd sound great if you played it on real instruments!"

Or, you might encounter some variation of the philosophically provocative, but still alarming remark:

"That's uncanny. It **does** sound like real music!"

Worst of all, there are those who will decline to listen at all, on the vague but discouragingly dismissive grounds that they just "don't really like *synthesizer music*."

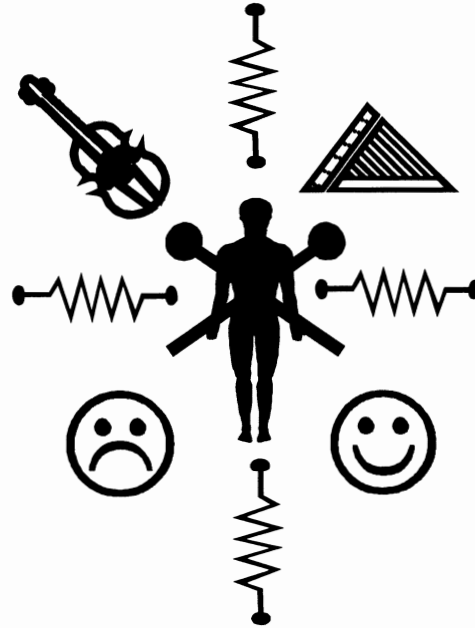
Clearly the attitude of some towards the "new technology" raises questions of aesthetics, and of authenticity, that deserve careful thought — and which I intend to address in detail in a lecture/concert presentation at our next (February) meeting.

Some of the issues I will be dealing with will include:

Is "synthesizer music" really music, or a simulation of music? Could there even *be* such a thing as "simulated music"? Who should get the credit for "synthesizer music"— man or machine? Is

there even such a genre as "synthesizer music"?

A few conclusions I'll be drawing: That resistance to "high tech" artwork often originates, not in ill will, but fear of embarrassment. People are afraid of being "fooled" in either or both of two senses: Of making a **category mistake**, such that they mistake "counterfeit" currency for the real thing. And secondly, of



mistakenly ascribing credit where credit is not due.

When we realize that these fears are not entirely without justification, our task as artists gains focus: We have to be able to deal with ignorant criticisms with enlightening clarification; and we also have to take pains to make sure that the time and effort our new technology saves us is re-invested in making better — not merely "more"— art.

Yes, philosophy's a bit of a head trip. But for the "right brainer" attendees, be of good cheer, 'cuz this is going to be as much a concert as a lecture. Yes, I'll be playing some of *my* sequenced stuff (which **does** sound uncannily like real music, and might even be good, if it was

played on real instruments!). Keyboard enthusiasts might also be interested in hearing my "machine" Peavey's DPM-3SE Composition Center, in action.

Biographical notes:

Hal Morris is a musician, artist, logician, legal scholar, writer, computer programmer, and philosopher.

He graduated magna cum laude from the University of Miami (1975), with a psych major and an undergraduate honors "thesis" on the psychology of music.

He subsequently earned a law degree (JD) from the University of Idaho (1978; practiced law in the Washington State Bar 1978-81); a Master's degree in philosophy from WSU (1981); a Master's in cognitive science from the University of British Columbia (1983), and a PhD in philosophy (symbolic logic emphasis), also from UBC (1989).

One of his more relevant past achievements was a presentation, "Divine Lightning—The Metaphysics of Inspiration" (1980), which combined a philosophical lecture on the subject of creative inspiration, with a slide show of his original pictorial art. Divine Lightning was sponsored by WSU Art Museum (and was attended by at least one of our CyberArts NW members, incidentally).

Some of his more relevant publications (to Cyberartists) include "Logical Creativity" in the journal "Theory and Psychology" (1990); "A Logic for Artificial Life", in Addison-Wesley's volume "Artificial Life" (1989); and "On the Feasibility of Computational Artificial Life" in "From Animals to Animats", MIT Press (1991).

Hal's mother was a piano teacher and he has played piano since his teens. He studied classical guitar and music theory at college. He acquired a Peavey Composition Center (his first "synth") in 1990 and music has been his primary focus since.

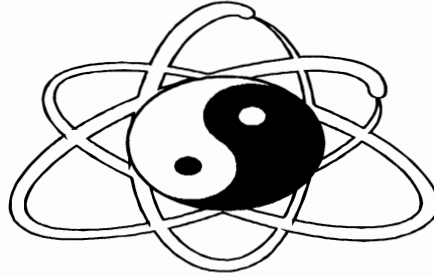
SACRED ART / TECHNOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

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tionality to now turn by the force of their own logic to become the tools of irrationality. In this case, the era of technological synthesis is upon us.

A particular media provides one constrained means through which to express life. I am claiming that the potential of new technologies to 'synthesize' away the boundaries between previously disparate media and modes of creation brings us to a new stage in the reconciliation of opposites: between high and low art, between author and consumer, between technique and mystique, between individual and group identity. In turn, I am suggesting that there is a tie between this expressive potential, personal integrity, artistic creation, sacred experience, and the synthesis that our society must forge in order to be more whole.

The outcome of this process—whether it truly helps our society to find new resolution to internal contradictions—hinges upon the integrity



of those who craft expression with the new media. The artist will face inward conflicts and resolve them through expressive synthesis, helping our society find new resolutions to the conflicts it tries to deny or ignore. Others will choose to avoid looking in the mirror, seeking instead to engineer technical props for the ego in a futile attempt to satiate the growing void in the center of our selves and our culture...

For the latter, stimulation through technological novelty will be the only concern and synthesis will only be the latest technique etched in silicon. For technological artists, on the other hand, the most important challenges and questions to be faced will not be technological, but emotional, ethical, and spiritual, and synthesis will be the process of worthwhile living of life.

References

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