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From behind these Bars #8, 2010, Polymers and stainless steel on basswood frame, 112 x 145 cm.

**To be Closest to Reality**

Simon Raab

I am compelled by confusion with reality. We can never truly see or understand any object or any situation with any confidence. I cannot help but wonder if what I see is real, who is who and what is what. It is not revisionist history; it is revisionist present. In my art, I am expressing my humility. My early college years were marked by a degree in physics and I continue to see reality expressed either in mathematical or philosophical terms. Chaos surrounds us and confusion is predictable. The visible spectrum we live in is only a tiny fraction of the full spectrum of what reality is. We see deformable space, particles in two places at the same time and flowing probabilities. Alas, to be closest to reality we must let go of our preconceptions and false anchors.

I am attracted to neither the abstract nor the figurative, but rather the transition and confusion between the two. I find comfort in a figurative form and I am compelled to abstract it by deforming the surface. The result is a change in the pattern of colors and an altered way in which light is reflected. I leave the 2D in a deliberate step between painting and sculpture. In my work, you may see something fleetingly familiar and comfortable, and my hope is to then take that away from you. It is all temporal, undefined, chaotic and uncomfortable. In the frustrating discomfort, I want you to relax and float on the turbulence of not knowing.

**Through the Water, 'Parleau'**

My art form is called Parleau, derived from the French "par l'eau", which means "through the water". It is a combination of painting and sculpture images enamelled on metal foil and then formed by hand to different degrees of spatial reflective abstraction. It is a creative and destructive process, which adds a random moving character to the surface. It is the surprise and randomness of the play of light that evokes the living. After 2D composition, the image is crushed, positioned and worked as if pounded in surf to evoke the third and higher dimensions – more successfully than the underlying figurative.

Parleau evolves to simulate the essence of seeing images through the rippling surface of water. The play of light, the intensity of color, the reflective qualities of the objects below the surface all appeal to me in a profound way. Perhaps there is a fundamental evolutionary basis for this. Life's origins are from water, there are the tears of emotion and the glistening sweat of exertion which link us all in a philosophical emotional and biological way. Water of course has many spiritual elements – holy water, the baptismal, the walking on water, Christ the living water among others. Water is the vehicle of spiritual cleansing and purification around the world. From Hinduism, Shinto and Islam to Judaism water plays an important spiritual role.

In Parleau every image, whether realistic, figurative or abstract, is joined in a group of more poetic statements about life, and the vibrancy we feel with the animate versus the inanimate. When I look at still images, I become frustrated by their flat stillness. They all seem to miss the biological breath and the glow of energy. Parleau does not permit detachment from life's moist reality, but it transforms images with a multitude of surfaces that sustain immeasurable depths in pools of reflection. It is the dimensional charm of impasto's search for texture of the third dimension carried to its logical optical conclusion.

Parleau images become philosophical and dynamic, whether they are pop, painterly sceneries or abstract forms. They all become translated into the chimera of our original language—the womb, the ocean and with it the emotion of life, like the sparkle in an eye that differentiates the dull look of the artificial from the intelligent and emotion-filled aura of the living.

**From Probabilities to Realization**

The 3D thread exposes itself without any prior analysis or planning and is exhibited in all my art forms. My art is the result of many years working in science and physics, encompassing a career focused on 3D measurement devices. This is compounded by my fascination with the micro/macro philosophical conflict. The micro-repeatable quantized building blocks of life and the macro-complex resultant diversity.

Parleau is about realizations. I realize that when I try to control, I control less. I realize that every time I try to color inside the lines that the color leaks out. I realize that understanding begins by admitting I don't understand. In physics, the uncertainty principal embodies this resistance to precision. The art begins formalized, boundary-delimited and planar—and then begins to quickly escape and deform and seek other dimensions. Where we are and what we are, are



but probabilities; empty space contains energy and space is deformable by the presence of matter which is always in motion.

Change your point-of-view or change your surroundings and the images in Parleau evolve, add and subtract color spontaneously and form with your context and mood. The scintillating pools of glare are upsetting and aggravating. Our brain tries to stop the motion and seeks the image but it remains frustrated and the image is never fully-absorbed. Like life, identifiable, familiar yet never fully understood.

In my world, I am just a bit player; I organize a few shapes and colors and the along the path of least action it is the statistics of all possible combinations, which takes control. Parleau lets the probabilities of the sculpted surface and the play of light control the perception and the emotion of this moment's reality.

I have trademarked Parleau, partially out of an honest sense of self-protection and partially as a comment on what the art world has become. There is so much talk of branding and its role in the commercial success of an artist. I self branded with a trademark irrespective of the art market view of it. It is like some of my embedded frames, where I take back the control lost when I let others frame my work.

But in the end, the branding intentions and the philosophical concepts behind the work all distil down to the need to make visual work which is captivating, synaptic, new and which creates a desire for ownership in the viewer.



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