

Nature
Doorways
Windows
Boundaries
Connections

Chaos /
Cosmos

the **Process** and
Inspirations^{of}
Robert Stanley

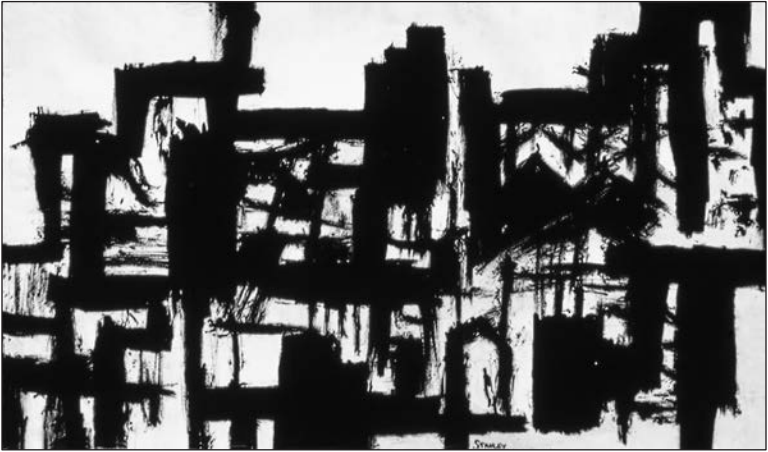
INTRODUCTION

Process and Inspirations

From a doorway entering on a dark hallway to objects communicating on the edge, my vision has gone through many stages. In my deepest spirit I sense there is a connection, perhaps even an order in the universe. Yet, as a philosopher said thousands of years ago, “you can never step into the same river twice.” The artworks plumb change, chaos, and order.

City #2

printing ink on paper, 15 x 23 in., 1962



One of the first pieces. At the time, I had no idea what I was doing, except that I wanted it to look good, which meant having unity of shape and stroke with variety, which I “worked at mindlessly and in the spirit of Klein. As I look back, I realize that even then I was wrestling with order (cosmos) and the randomness of life (chaos). Hints of doorways as entrances to new worlds of thought and action are also here, a little more consciously.

Farm

watercolor and ink, 20 x 24 in., 1963



“Farm” was done on-scene, and is an early interpretation of the rolling landscape of southern Ohio. I loved the land and smells of that farm country.

In this piece too, I see the conflict of order and chaos, although crudely stated, with many compositional weaknesses.

A Path

watercolor, 24 x 30 in., 1966



Composition and concept are stronger here. Although abstracted, horizon and doorway are suggested, as well as, to my mind, Autumn, when I did it.

Shadow into Entry

acrylic on canvas paper, 24 x 20 in., 1967



An early exploration of doorway, done while living in the city of Cincinnati, without much landscape available.

Hallway

acrylic, 42x38in., 1968



While working in my faculty office, some movement outside the door caught my attention. As I turned and looked up, whatever had been there was gone—only a dark, empty hall remained. I was struck by that doorway and empty hallway. This simple sight suggested future encounters, fears, questions, relationships — whole worlds yet to be.

This doorway, this simple idea of whole worlds beyond the here-and-now, chaos outside the comfort of order, had become the touchstone for future work.

Three Doorways Figures

acrylic, 50 x 32 in., 1969



While getting my Master's at Pratt the next year (1969), I explored the effects of trying to paint things barely visible, like people in a landscape on a moonless night. It was as if I had gone out into that dark hallway and tried to find out what was there. After grad school, its dark explorations combined with the flatness and strong regular geometry previously explored in *Hallway*

Man Viewing Urban Environment

*Installation, William Penn Museum, Harrisburg, PA,
12 x 12 ft., 1970*



The viewer peers through a window in this piece, but not an ordinary window. Fitting in with the environmental content of the work, this window was made of old plastic, so the view was impure. Inside, slides of urban spaces were projected on a screen made of whitewashed trash. A two-dimensional man sat, looking at this view of reality.

Man Walking (Unpainted)

acrylic, 40x36in., 1971



In *Man Walking (Unpainted)* the colors created more space and the shapes were more lively. The “other worlds” previously suggested by a dark hall were now more subtle: the red corner led the viewer off. There was also a person. This human figure was the only unpainted area. His being unfinished contrasted suggested in another way the immanence of the moment and the continuing mixture of chaos and order in a person’s life.

Avenue de Moi et Toi

assemblage, acrylic, 28x22in., 1972



The next period used an even greater number of strange areas, ideas, and media. *Avenue de Moi et Toi* launched strange objects, painted areas, and the suggestion of a window (from the doorway theme). A new statement begins to show up here: a belief that there is order in all the chaos of our worlds. This belief is suggested by the hidden, ordered grid of the composition.

Studio (corner) Dream

acrylic, 42x36in., 1973



The next series of works, represented by *Studio (corner) Dream* (which was selected for the 1974 “New Horizons in Art” exhibit in Chicago), added something new: a greater sense of space. This new use of space to hint at floating worlds melded with older aspects, such as doorway imagery (an open window). The human body also reappears, as a shadow. But it was the use of space that most distinguished this new vision.

Y

acrylic, 36x42in., 1974



The painting "Y" brought out the landscape, its solidness and its transience. Doorway appears in the dark upper right section. The human body also appears as similar to landscape in shape and meaning.

Tectonic Ohio Soul

pastel, 12 x 18 in., 1976



Reflecting on the hilly landscape, I came to realize that I liked it not only for the beauty of its abstract shapes, but for its revelation of order through time. These hills were once mountains, then under an ocean, then lifted up and eroded to their present shapes. The strong diagonal suggests the power of the earth's tectonic movements, the geometric vertical in the upper left, the doorway to new things.

This piece was selected by Patterson Sims, Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, for the International All on Paper Exhibit, AAO Exhibition Gallery, Buffalo, NY.

Eyegates #1

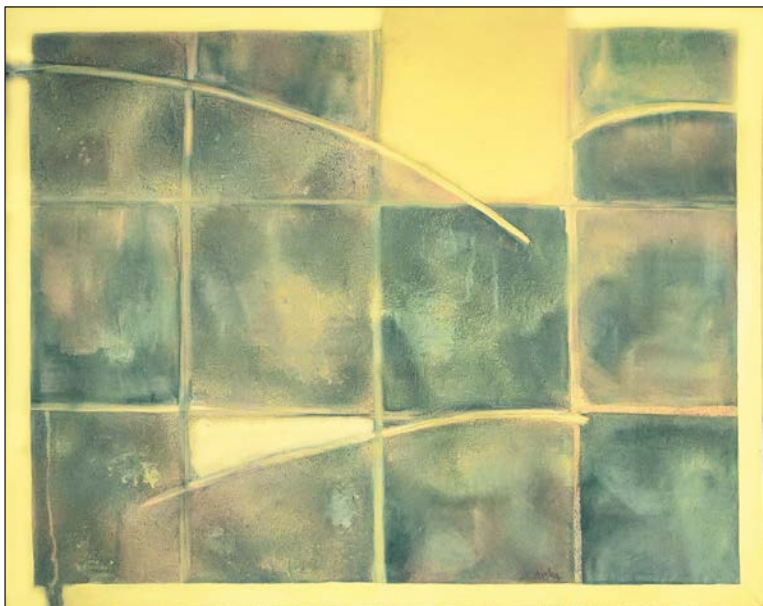
acrylic, 36x48in., 1979



A major evolution occurred in a series of works called "Eyegates." *In Eyegates #1* a dark entryway, landscape, and human figure remain, although they are greatly changed. The painting is much lighter, and a grid figures prominently. This grid hints at an order underlying the material worlds of landscape and body. To make the spiritual world seem as important as the physical world, I weakened the colors and sensual strength of the physical world by casting these paintings in a washed out key.

Eyegates #9

acrylic, 46x36in., 1980



By the time the last of the series, *Eyegates #9*, was completed, the figure and landscape had merged into similar hip-like curves, and, most importantly, a border had appeared. This border was an accident that was to new meanings. Why an artist uses some accidents yet paints out others is a mystery.

Fossil of an End

acrylic, 36x48in., 1983



A border in the paintings might seem to be of small concern, since it is literally almost out of the picture. Yet it was precisely this placement that made it important. In *Fossil of an End* the earlier idea of a door leading to new and unknown realities evolved into a boundary/ border surrounding all. In this group of paintings I called the "Boundaries Series," the line-like elements within the border intersect and create the landscape elements within the main field of the paintings.

Some Explanation:

The Artist's Statement of this time described a new evolution of the original doorway vision:

My art reflects the experience that energies beyond the usual range of perception change both the universe and my personal world. Borders/boundaries in the works hint at underlying realities, underlying mysteries, underlying order.

Nature holds many examples of hidden forces. Underlying the beauty in the subtle sweep of the northern lights is the clash of the Earth's magnetic field with particles of the solar wind. Some spots on the Earth were once under an ocean now thousands of miles away. There is order in these fluctuations and changes. Also hidden and mysterious is the fate, destiny, or coincidence which brings us together or separates us from someone we love. Thus, our moments are "ordered" by underlying, often unseen energies.

Birth Edge

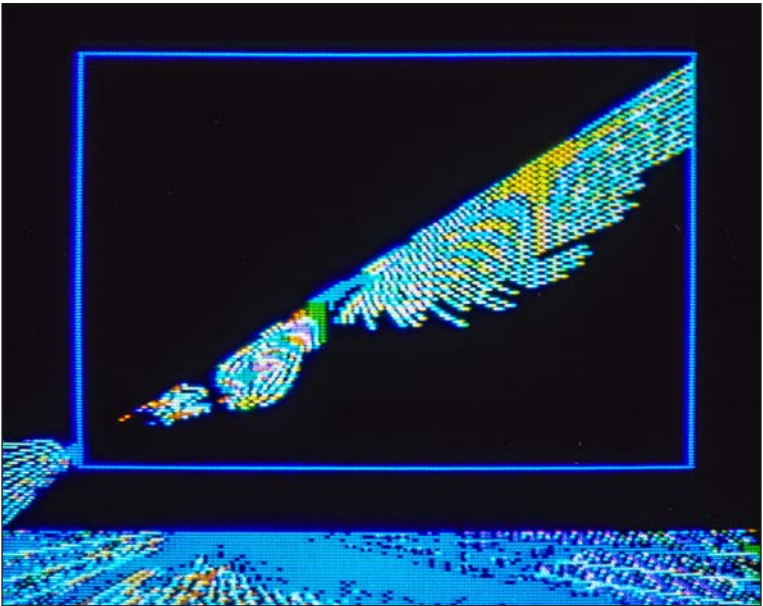
acrylic, 36x48in., 1989



Gradually the border changed into an edge. In *Birth Edge* (7/15/89, acrylic, 48"x36") and *Worlds* (10/13/89, acrylic, 48"x36") a boundary still existed, but the main fields were more fluid and dynamic. The paintings had now become more sensual and poetic.

Vespers Light

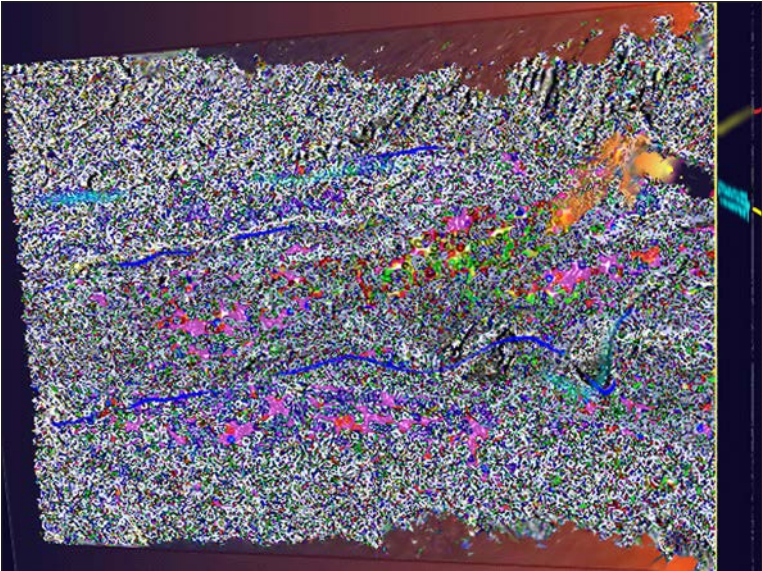
computer [cibachrome], 8x10in., 1990



A similar evolution in the borders/boundaries occurred in the computer works. *Vespers Light* was simple in its use of border and shape. The medium itself was respected, expressing my vision in a way that no other medium could. In this work intense color and moire (interference) patterns are effects special to the computer medium.

Heraclitus View

computer [cibachrome], 8x10in., 1994



Heraclitus View is also uniquely of the computer medium. It does not look like trick photography or oil painting. Only on a computer would such colors, textures, and patterns spring up naturally. In terms of my vision, these works use intensely colored line as a boundary/ border. On either side of these boundaries the areas are connected yet different — like events in nature or changes in our lives. Landscape and doorways are referred to. *Heraclitus View* was shown in the 1994 Musée d'Art Contemporain Triennial, and is in that museum's permanent collection in Chamalieres, France

Sunset Viscera

computer [cibachrome], 8x10in., 1995



The vision evolved again as both computer works and paintings became less abstract — real world objects began to appear. Boundaries still remained, but there was more drama and narrative in the computer work *Sunset Viscera*...

Natural Visions, Lives

acrylic, 24x24in., 1995



...and in the painting *Natural Visions, Lives*. Being so recent, it is difficult to see all the ways they might relate to previous works. I believe they still reflect other worlds beyond the one most obvious to our senses and mind. They do not, however, suggest order as serenely as did previous works. There is more bite to them.

Vision Narratives

computer [cibachrome], 8x10in., 1996



Works, both computer and paintings, began to take on something new. Objects were placed out at the edges. In the computer piece, *Vision Narratives*, doorways and windows remain. A mystery also appears, a pyramidal shape at the center. This might represent the way we create ordered thoughts while physical reality and our subconscious remain obscure, chaotic.

Chiaroscuro

acrylic, 36x48in., 1997



Chiaroscuro, was painted a year later and now the center had begun to empty. What are the relationships/ dialogs between the objects? Do the empty spaces and edges express hope, fear, or both? These ambiguities are a new turn.

Pieces

acrylic, collage on canvas, 35x35 in., 1998



Instead of painting real objects, such as the light in *Chiaroscuro* [previous page] I added a real object, the masking tape with paint on it. This contrasted with the skewed and even more mysterious image of a man's shadow from *Vision Narratives* [page 24]. I also enjoyed the sensuality of the painted ground, and painting a realistic figure.

At That Time

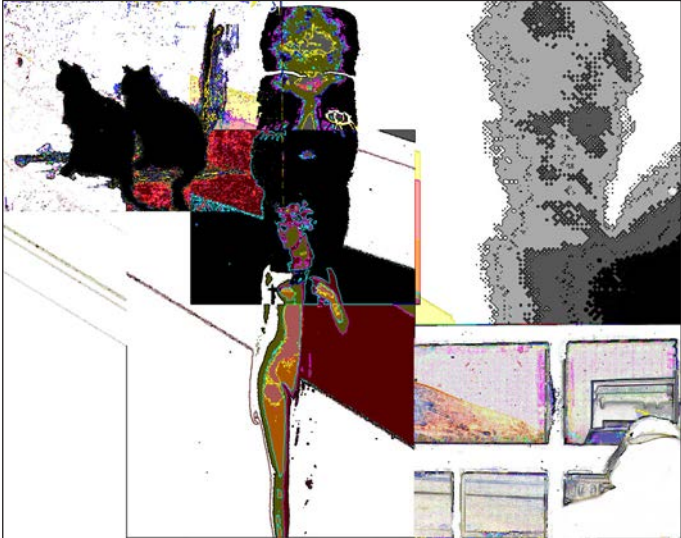
acrylic, 36x48in., 1999



At That Time became more complex, perhaps darker in emotion. The real objects in this piece were the squeezed out paint blobs. A man is barely discernible, sitting near the middle of the piece, floating in a subtly altering field of color. Originally, he was an angel, resting with wings folded because he was worn out. Perhaps the starkness, pain, and confusion in the images around him made him tired. Each of the separate images has a story, and viewers have room to participate in their own ways, perhaps even making a narrative that fits them. That was my hope.

Psyche Viscera

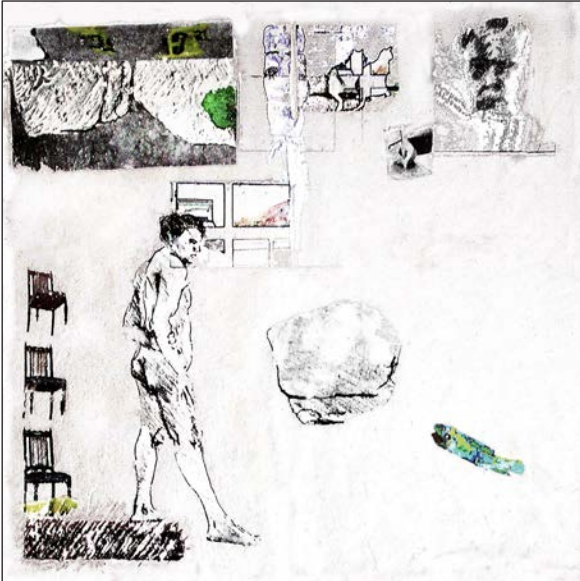
archival computer print (ed. 50), 24 x 32 in., 2001



This computer work emerges into a more sanguine mood, yet still sees chaos and order, doorways, connections, sensuality and reason—all striving with one another.

A Moment

fresco on masonite panel, 12x12in., 2002



A Moment is one of my favorites. When a fish looks at a rock, it sees a rock. A human may well bring to it memories, fantasies, neuroses, hopes—it is another doorway into order (nature’s millennial shaping of it) and chaos (again, nature’s accidental interfacing).

Fragments, The Artist on Site

Installation, 100 ft x 80 ft., 2004



Like a previous installation piece years earlier which came out of an interest in windows and doorways, this piece sprang from my evolving interest in the randomness and order as we experience the world. Frames were suspended in various places so the participant could get a picture of a small part of the outside world, fragments of concrete with words were scattered. A chair and several tables were provided for viewing and writing/sharing experiences with other viewers. A large artwork reproduced a piece of the landscape beyond. Randomness, order, and making art are presented are the themes of this installation.



Elation

acrylic, 24x36 in., 2004



The randomness, or chaos, is represented less by objects than by the paint strokes in the ground. A figure still wonders, caught between sensed reality, the chair, and creating beauty, the abstract.

Three Or

acrylic, 24x30 in., 2006



The people contemplate the sun in front of them, which is actually the inside of a paint jar lid, while the just-as-real moon is invisible, beneath the horizon. The doorway is suggested by that horizon.

Nearly Simultaneous

acrylic and collage on canvas, 36 x 48 in., 2006



The ancients (here represented by Peruvian masks) made sense of their world in their way. Against the backdrop of chaos somehow ordered, I make sense through drawing a reality I experience. At the same time, the permanence of my work is like that of the slide holder, old and missing the slide itself, beneath the woman.

Palimpsest

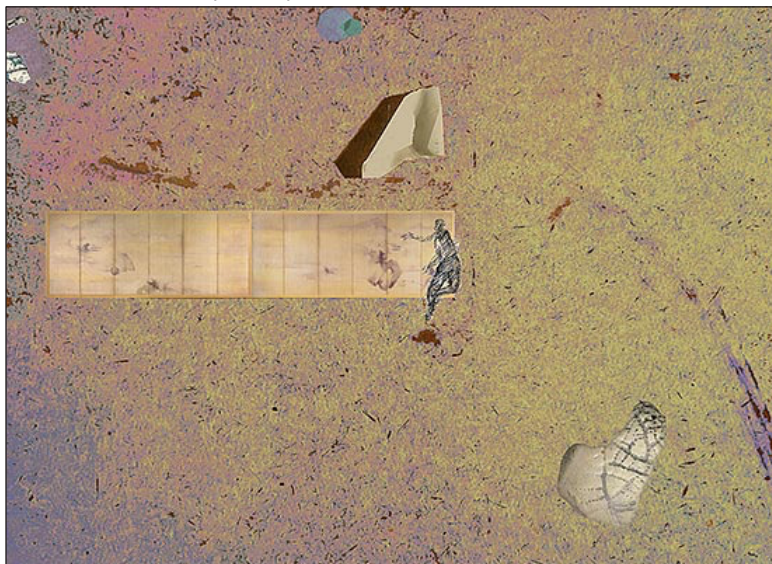
acrylic and canvas on canvas, 36 x 48 in., 2006



A dialectic between my painting of Cézanne's Mt. St. Victoire, the realistic leaf I painted, and the real leaf "buried" under an attached piece of canvas in the upper right. All of these things are made visible against the background chaos.

Fossil Now

archival computer print (ed. 50), 24 x 32 in., 2008



The colors in the main field are random-appearing, yet have a kind of order. The running thrower near the middle has in front of him an ancient Japanese screen, with its typical spaces between objects, and a piece of masking tape. Somehow these capture the mystery of meaning in a world of flux. The pottery shard in the lower right, with its unreadable marks, also carries the spirit of immanence and impermanence.

I Am Smiling

acrylic, charcoal, collage on canvas, 24 x 24 in., 2009



The chaotic ground has a man swimming in it, upper left. The chair is a suggestion of flux, the flow of the river of time—someone may have just left, or someone may be about to sit down. Surrounding are pieces of reality captured by art: a hill in watercolor, a photo collage of a person and environment. For some reason, perhaps recalling the Peruvian masks in *Nearly Simultaneous*, a contemporary mask states, “I love you. I am smiling.”

A Survey

ink on paper, 22 x 28 in. , 2010



A survey—of time, of nature/culture, of life/death, of me, and I don't know what else, or even if it is what I think it is. Doorways, chaos, images not related yet somehow related, modern circuits, ancient marble faces, our animal nature, signal from a black hole, contemplation, joy.....

Squared, Fleetingly

acrylic on canvas, 36x36in., 2011



Concerns simplified to: time (a shell), vastness in possible views and acts (the person in the water), and the artist gone off to his study via paint splattered stairs.

Flow and Pauses

assemblage, 16 x 14in., 2012



Doorways, windows, contemporary objects, ancient objects, drawing, the animal in us, and media of all types—fun with materials.

Tear

archival computer print (ed. 50), 24 x 32 in, 2013



This began with iridescence emphasized from a photo of a window. Added the jail cell and the drawing of a sunlit hillside as expressions of life as it is. Then the butterfly wing I had collected and put in a plastic bag, something about the passing of life, and randomness. Then the photo of a young girl I had taken in Harrisburg thirty-some years ago came to mind. She's the key, the one about to start out.

Arc of a Life

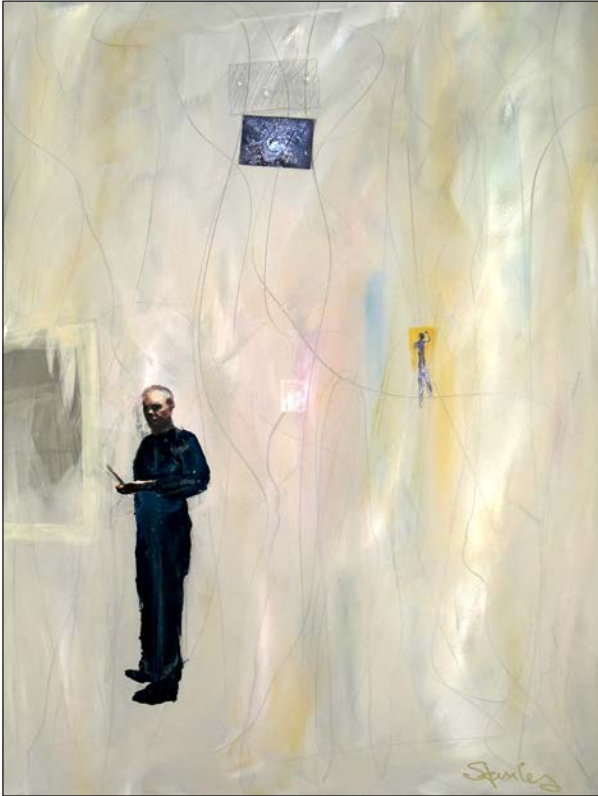
ink on paper (computer monoprint), 11 x 14 in., 2014



From a statue of antiquity to a leaf, through doorways and many objects swirling in the current of life, a hand reaches for something.

Las Meninas

acrylic and collage on canvas, 48 x 36 in, 2009



About existential contemporary flows, there's a reference to Johns' similar concern with flow (*Untitled* 1992). The painting shares Velásquez's positioning of the artist in *Las Meninas*, but dissolves the confined space of that painting into the chaos of the flow we swim in today. Velásquez' *Las Meninas* is a painting about deep representation, as is mine.

