THE REBIRTH OF SACRED ART:
REFLECTIONS ON THE APERSPECTIVAL GEOMETRIC ART
OF ADI DA SAMRAJ

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Adi Da Samraj working in "Picture Perfect", his studio in Fiji.

Abstract

For nearly forty years the artist, scholar and spiritual teacher Adi Da Samraj (1939-2008) was involved in the production of a highly diverse and unique body of artistic work, ranging from Zen-like ink brush paintings to multiple exposure photography, videographic suites synchronized with music and, most recently, monumentally scaled abstract geometric images generated by digital technology.[1]

Adi Da's purpose in all of this work was to create images which would enable the fully participatory viewer to experience a taste of the inherently blissful state of nondual awareness that he asserts is our native condition once we transcend the presumption and experience of being a separate "subjective" self perceiving a separate "objective" reality. To make such "aesthetic ecstasy" possible he formed each image to be a "Self Presentation of 'Reality Itself',"[2] which he describes as being inherently "Non-separate, One and Indivisible,"[3] and always prior to space-time and every separate and separative "point of view."

Adi Da's exploration of the art of "Reality Itself" culminated in his abstract geometric images which he describes as being "aperspectival, anegoic and aniconic." Whereas his work with the camera "established an approach to image-making which transcended the inherent limitations (or fixed characteristics of the camera as a 'point of view'-machine", these monumentally scaled geometric images were aimed at undermining "the structuring-force of the conventional and ego-based uses of the body as a perceptual mechanism."[4] His purpose in doing this was to liberate the image-making as well as the image-perceiving process into "the free-domain of egoless coincidence with Reality Itself'."[5]

Adi Da's collateral exhibition at the 52nd Biennale di Venezia in 2007, curated by renowned art critic, Achille Bonito Oliva, marked the first time his visual art was shown

to an international art public.[6] During the spring of 2008 selections from that exhibition were on view at the exhibit, *Transcendental Realism: The Art of Adi Da Samraj*, displayed in the Cenacolo di Ognissanti in Florence, Italy. The spatial juxtaposition in the same room of Adi Da's monumental aperspectival geometric art with Domenico Ghirlandaio's large perspectival fresco of *The Last Supper*, provided the author with an occasion for considering the nature, meaning and experience of Adi Da's work within the framework of the history of Western consciousness, culture and art.

Transcendental Realism: The Art of Adi Da Samraj, Cenacolo di Ognissanti,
February 23--July 19, 2008. Photo: Nick Elias

The Invention and Importance of Linear Geometric Perspective

In the history of Western civilization, it is generally recognized that the shift from the Medieval Age to the Renaissance marks the transition from a God-centered society to a human-centered society. This great transformation in consciousness and culture arose first in the realm of art, and is marked by the discovery of linear geometric perspective by the Florentine architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) at the beginning of the fifteenth century.[7] This invention then spread throughout the western world when the rules for perspective were codified by artist, architect and philosopher Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) in his widely influential book, *Della pittura,* which was published in 1435.[8] Perspective revolutionized art and architecture, and even culture altogether, in the Western world for the next five hundred years, contributing to the rise of Cartesian science, Enlightenment Reason and the modern culture of secular humanism. Thus, it would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that the world we live in today largely finds its origins in ideas, perceptions and practices that grew out of the artistic culture of the city of Florence some six hundred years ago.[9]

The story of Brunelleschi's dramatic public demonstration of the power of perspective reveals a great deal about the spiritual origins and nature of the modern world. Sometime

around 1425, Brunelleschi secretly painted a small, highly realistic image of the Baptistery of San Giovanni as it would have appeared in a mirror-reversed perspective when seen from a single point of view located just inside the portal of Santa Maria del Fiore, the great Duomo opposite the Baptistery for which he was later to build the world's largest dome. This painting also included as much of the piazza and the surrounding buildings as would have been visible from a cone of vision located at that single point. Instead of painting a sky, however, he burnished the area where the sky would have been with silver so that the actual sky could be reflected in it. For purposes of his demonstration, Brunelleschi also drilled a small hole in the painting of the Baptistery at the point that would have been exactly opposite the point within the portal of the Duomo from which the perspective of the Baptistery had been constructed.
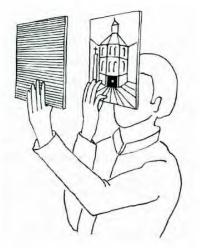

Figure illustrating Brunelleschi's demonstration of perspectival illusion, reproduced from Samuel Y. Edgerton, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective*, New York: Basic Books, 1975, pg 126.

Brunelleschi then set up his painting between the Baptistery and the entry to Santa Maria del Fiore, and called for volunteers to look through the peephole from behind the surface of the painting with one eye, while holding a mirror at a mathematically correct distance in front of the painting. Astonishingly to all who were gathered, each viewer saw what appeared to be the actual scene of the Baptistery and Piazza of San Giovanni as it would have appeared had they been standing and looking at it from the portal of the Duomo. The effect of the mirror was to minimize the viewer's awareness of the presence of the painted surface and to intensify the sense of depth of the painting. Also, because of the silvered sky in the painting the mirror reflected the real sky with its constantly moving clouds within the sky of the painting, imparting a heightened and even magical sense of reality to the painted image.[10] When viewers lowered the mirror, while still looking through the peephole, they were astonished to see what appeared to be the same view of the Baptistery that they had seen through the reflected mirror image of Brunelleschi's perspectival painting.

By thus demonstrating to the public the breathtaking realism of his newly discovered system of linear geometric perspective, it seemed to Brunelleschi's contemporaries that he had discovered how to re-create the world through the power of an art that precisely reflected physical reality as it is seen by the detached observer. Alberti even described Brunelleschi as a second *god* in his dedication to him in the Italian edition of his book, in which he presented a systematic explanation of Brunelleschi's perspective system for use by artists and architects.

As seen by Alberti and others during the time of the Italian Renaissance, the magical new art of perspective not only had the power to turn the artist into a god-like being capable of replacing reality with life-like simulacra but seemed itself to possess a divine force by which mortality and the terror of time could be overcome. Not only could paintings make their subjects appear to be present when they were physically absent, but they could also confer a kind of immortality through the power of the image to live on unchanged by the passage of time. By thus freezing space and time in a single moment from a single point of view, (as the camera would someday do even more convincingly), linear perspective granted the artist an illusion of power over the mortal realm and promised a kind of deliverance from the fear of death that accompanied the rise of individualism at the beginning of the modern age.[11]

Rather than seeing perspectival painting as being opposed to Christian teachings about the nature of God and cosmos, as St. Augustine might have imagined had he lived to see this radically new form of art, Alberti and other highly religious Renaissance artists such as Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449-1494), believed that linear perspective would allow art to replace magic in the service of religion.[12] While the many extraordinarily beautiful religious paintings done in this style of spatial and material realism did initially have the intended effect of intensifying religious fervor, the very use of perspective and realistic rendering techniques over the centuries also had the entirely unintended effect of helping to undermine the grand edifice of the God-centered, dualistic medieval worldview which still dominated thought and belief at the time of the Renaissance.[13]

Renaissance Perspectival Art and the Aperspectival Art of Adi Da Samraj

In addition to codifying and communicating rules for the construction of linear geometric perspective, Alberti further asserts in his book that the inventor of the quasi-divine art of painting itself was none other than Narcissus. In Ovid's tale, Narcissus is the beautiful and beloved child of the gods, who refused the love of Echo and died alone gazing in the pond, transfixed by his mirrored image and longing only to embrace his own reflection. Alberti, the great theorist of the art of perspective in painting, thus openly, if perhaps unintentionally, portrays painting as a form of self-love and self-deception, a turning away from love and all relationships in order to possess a reflected self-image. Without apology Alberti was thus acknowledging the Narcissistic roots of visual art and the modern age.[14]

What is of particular interest in a consideration of the aperspectival art of Adi Da Samraj in this account of the origins of visual art and the birth of perspective in Renaissance Italy, is the fact that for nearly four decades Adi Da used the image of Narcissus as a primary metaphor to describe what he calls the "ego-'I'," or, the "separate and separative self."[15] Rather than creating an art that celebrates and reinforces Narcissus's fixation on his own image as it is reflected in the pond, as Alberti and other Renaissance artists did, Adi Da dedicated his art to drawing the attention of Narcissus away from the pond. As he repeatedly points out, linear geometric perspective was (and is) the defining art of the ego-"I": it is a way of both picturing and reinforcing our human bondage to a single, limited and entirely conditional point of view. "In the conventions of perspectival image-art, the physical eye and the ego-'I' are the same."[16] By contrast, Adi Da explains that, "The intrinsically ego-transcending root-presumption associated with the image-art I make and do is precisely the opposite of the ego-based and ego-idealizing root-presumption associated with perspectival image-art. Perspectival image-art glorifies the ego's construction of the world—as if that ego-constructed world is (itself) Reality Itself—whereas Reality Itself is always <u>Prior</u> to the ego's construction of a world and to any and every 'point of view' within the world."[17]

Properly understood, then, Adi Da's aperspectival images must be seen and experienced as a literal inversion of the logic and method of Narcissus and a radical response to the limitations implicit in perspectival vision that have dominated the last six hundred years of Western art, architecture, science and religion.

The Modernist Revolt Against Perspectival Consciousness and Vision

In a complex and often paradoxical process that began with the invention of perspective in the Renaissance, the ego-centered and materialistic development of Western civilization progressed unchallenged for hundreds of years, following the inexorable logic of its own premises and methods. Then, suddenly and unexpectedly at the beginning of the 20th century, all the arts and sciences exploded in what can only be described as a widespread rebellion in the western world against the limitations of perspectival thought, perception and expression.[18] As a result, all prior understandings of the nature of space, time and reality in the domains of art and science were forever changed, with consequences that are only now beginning to be realized.[19] In 1905 Albert Einstein read his momentous paper on electrodynamics, concluding that no particular observer or point of view was more privileged than any other within the framework of universal space-time. Arnold Schoenberg challenged the continuity of the western classical musical tradition with the development of twelve-tone (or serial) composition. Braque and Picasso broke with the tradition of perspectival representation that started with the Renaissance, producing Cubist paintings that portrayed objects from multiple perspectives simultaneously, suggesting, in still another way, the relativity of all points-of-view. Other artists, including Wassily Kandinsky, Robert Delaunay, Kasimir Malevich, and Piet Mondrian, began to free themselves of all attempts to represent objects as they appear in the physical world and moved in the direction of a completely new abstract art.[20] In 1922, James Joyce summarily overturned the linear, sequential

narrative tradition of the novel with the publishing of his book, *Ulysses*. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius designed buildings with non-load-bearing walls, fluid spaces with dynamically shifting perspectives and transparent building skins emphasizing the interconnections between inside and outside. And, with the design of his first Taliesin complex, his home and studio in Spring Green, Wisconsin, Frank Lloyd Wright was bringing to maturity a historically unprecedented organic architecture that he believed would finally destroy "the box", illuminate the "cave of human dwelling," and join architecture and nature in a new symbiotic unity.[21]

Adi Da points out, however, that the modernist revolt against perspectival consciousness was occurring within the context of a century marked by two catastrophic world wars and a planetary process of civilizational collapse, rather than within a framework that allowed for the possibility of cultural renewal.[22] Thus, rather than continuing to explore the liberating impulses of modernism, the last decades of the twentieth century saw the emergence of what has been called postmodernism, which in spite of some of its positive aspects, largely has devolved into a solipsistic, ironic and radically relativistic worldview and form of art which both expresses and gives rise to a spreading sense of nihilism and despair.[23]

As a result we now find ourselves living in a world in which there are no longer any master narratives or privileged "points of view" from which to understand or describe the irreducibly complex and ultimately mysterious reality in which we find ourselves.[24] It is as if the culturally sanctioned world that has been in the making since the Renaissance has reached its *reductio ad absurdum* and is now in the process of deconstructing as both a desirable and viable cultural form and mode of consciousness.[25]

Thus, at the beginning of the twenty-first century it seems that all things are possible, everything is relative, and nothing has any intrinsic meaning.[26] At the end of our centuries-long quest for individual freedom, material comfort, scientific certainty and technological control over nature, we have arrived at a condition in which all certainties, authorities and traditions are dissolving into a morass of irreducible relativity, with everything from the planetary ecology to the global economy spinning out of control. Reality not only seems to elude our grasp, but, in principle, seems to be ungraspable.

It is within the context of this long historical process leading to our present environmental, existential and societal crises that Adi Da's aperspectival geometric art must be understood. He summarizes our moment in time, as it relates to the purposes of his art, clearly and succinctly: "The old civilization idealized the ego, and it ended up with a world of egos destroying one another. That course, in fact, is still happening and must be stopped—but it cannot be stopped merely by force. A transformation of human understanding and of human processes altogether must occur—on every level, including the artistic level."[27]

While noting the importance of their prescient spiritual intuitions and important artistic accomplishments, Adi Da also observes that the avant-garde artists of the early twentieth century never fully succeeded in transcending "point of view": ironically, they ended up

preserving "point of view" by merely asserting the simultaneous presence of multiple points of view. In making his art, Adi Da's intention was to fully realize what was only implicitly potential in the Modernist project: complete liberation from "point of view" itself.[28] He describes his image-art in these terms: "The image-art I make and do is the intrinsically ego-transcending—and, thus and thereby, perspective-transcending, or intrinsically aperspectival—image-art that participates in (or egolessly coincides with) Reality Itself."[29]
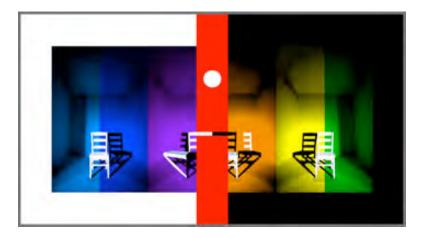

Adi Da Samraj, working on his aperspectival geometric digital
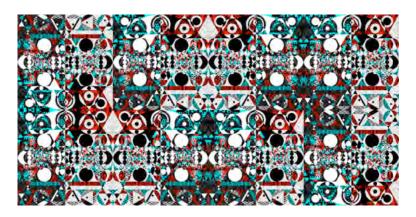art in "Picture Perfect"

If the perspectival art of the Renaissance helped to initiate a spiraling trajectory of societal changes which eventually led to the modern and postmodern worlds, then, as Adi Da asserts, a truly "aperspectival, anegoic and aniconic" art will be required for the creation of the new modes of perception and understanding necessary for the next great transformation in consciousness and culture.[30] His larger purpose was always to contribute to just such an epochal change: "I am making art that is intended to be of greatest significance and transformative power—art that invites profound participation, rather than the mode of casual and dissociated viewing that allows and supports (and even requires, and, ultimately, even institutionalizes) mere 'objectification' and dissociative (or strategically non-participatory) detachment. I want to transform peoples' participation in art—and also their participation in Reality (Itself, and altogether)—and help them to a new way of life, out of the "dark" period in which humankind is presently immersed."[31]

Transcendental Realism: The Art of Adi Da Samraj

The spring 2008 exhibition in Florence, *Transcendental Realism: The Art of Adi Da Samraj*, offered visitors an opportunity to experience four selections of Adi Da's aperspectival art displayed in the Cenacolo di Ognissanti, a beautiful space which

The "First Room" Trilogy I (90 inches x 165 inches), Adi Da Samraj (2006),
exhibited in the Venice Biennale (2007) and the Cenacolo di Ognissanti, Florence (2008)
Adi Da uses "First Room" to mean the "Bright" space of Love-Bliss-Happiness that "Always Already
Exists" prior to all self-contracted, ego-made points of view.

The Subject in Question I (90 inches x 180 inches), from *Geome Four*, 2006.
According to Adi Da, the mosaic-like structure "puts the perceiver in touch with how experience is
organized by mind, brain and body, drawing the viewer "into a root-level experience" that points toward
the non-duality of "Reality-Itself."

contains one of the finest examples of the perspectival art of the Renaissance, *The Last Supper (1480)*, a fresco by Domenico Ghirlandaio. Thus, at this exhibition it was possible, within the confines of a single room, to experience two radically different visions of art, consciousness, and reality which have arisen out of two very different historical epochs. It might be said that at this exhibition one was able to look back to the glorious art of the past and forward toward the unknown vistas of the art of the future.

Adi Da provides a tri-partite framework that is essential for understanding his art in relation to the art of the past. He says that "There is 'God-art', there is 'ego-art', and there is 'Reality-art'."[32] In the context of this framework, he considers pre-Renaissance art in the west to be "God-art", a form of expression that is "about what the space-time-bound ego presumes to exist above and beyond itself."[33] The content of such art, in his view, is "principally intended to visually portray the mythology of divinity in one mode or another, including (in later centuries) the Christian mode."[34] Since it was presumed that the realm of God, or the gods and various mythological beings, was fundamentally immaterial, spiritual and transcendental there was no desire before the Renaissance to visually represent "God-space" as being anything like the physical spaces of the everyday world. "God-art" was thus conceived as being entirely symbolic rather than "realistic".[35]

The Renaissance represented a radical break with this ancient, universal tradition of sacred art. For the first time artists became passionately interested in making geometrically accurate representations of physical spaces and the material objects within them. Even religious art was increasingly valued for how well it simulated the physical world rather than by how well it evoked a vision of an intrinsically unknowable and mysterious spiritual world. From the Renaissance onward the inner eye of the spirit was gradually replaced by the physical eye of the body as the primary organ of perception and knowledge.[36]

As a result, according to Adi Da, western art since the Renaissance can be described as "ego-art", which is art that is "specifically designed to portray the ego's view (or 'point-of-view'-construction) of 'reality', by means of the systematic application of the codified laws of perspective."[37] He goes on to say, however, that, "Even the thoroughly secularized avant-garde Western image-art of the 'modern' and 'post-modern' era is still a play upon (or a failed effort to escape from) the tradition of 'ego-art', or 'point-of-view'-art." Thus we are still living within the era of "ego-art."[38]

The Last Supper

Ghirlandaio's beautiful and masterfully executed fresco of *The Last Supper* fills the short end of the long narrow refectory at the Ognissanti church. While its content is still religious in nature, it is a paradigmatic example of what Adi Da calls perspectival "ego-art". Painted as an illusionistic extension of the actual space of the room, this softly colored and balanced image presents the traditional scene of Jesus and the apostles gathered around a table partaking of Christianity's first sacramental meal. It is rendered in the same style and in the same colors as the room itself. The arches of the ceiling of the

painting follow the lines of the actual space while the floor of the painted room is placed above the floor of the refectory, creating the impression that one is looking at a kind of raised niche or alcove. The human figures and material objects in the fresco are realistically represented as three-dimensional physical bodies, receiving light from their painted windows and casting the appropriate shadows. Beyond the arches of this painted room one can see realistically rendered but highly symbolic trees, birds and a calm, cloud-filled sky. One has the sense of looking beyond the real room and through the virtual space of the fresco into a "real" outside world, which extends infinitely beyond one's sight.[39]

The effect of Ghirlandaio's perspectival illusion is to create the impression that the figures in the Gospel story are actually present in the same space in which the viewer is located. By means of perspective and realistic forms of material representation, the barriers between real space and virtual space, sacred space and profane space, times past and times present are magically dissolved to create a new unified spatio-temporal reality. Ghirlandaio's fresco is a visually pleasing and comforting work of art that makes few demands on the viewer. For today's visitors it readily affirms the way we have learned to see the world since the Renaissance. To the viewers in the fifteenth century, however, it must have figured a dramatically new sense of reality which, as intended, strongly reinforced the Church's Medieval Christian worldview.

Looking at Ghirlandaio's fresco, one can readily see that the surface of perspectival art such as this is, just as Alberti says, a kind of window, an invisible picture plane which looks onto a purportedly "objective" outside world. The space beyond this window, however, does not include the viewer, who always remains detached, floating somewhere outside the picture. If one is attentive to the actual experience of *The Last Supper*, it is also possible to feel how one's ordinary, taken for granted sense of being a separate skin-bound self existing within an objective, all-surrounding outside world (not-self) is magnified by means of perspective. As Adi Da observes, this reinforcement through art of "point of view" consciousness comes with a hidden cost: "When one looks at perspectivally-based image-art, one is constantly being reminded of oneself, constantly being relocated in one's own presumed separateness. One is, in effect, constantly walking into one's own face. Thus, perspectivally-based image-art is inherently Narcissistic art, regardless of its apparent 'subject' matter."[40]

Alberti's Window I

Adi Da's aperspectival art is radically different from all forms of myth-based "God-art", as well as all forms of perspective-based "ego-art", and even all forms of non-perspectival and multi-perspectival "ego-art" of the modern and post-modern eras. Adi Da defines his images as an entirely new kind of artistic expression. "The image-art I make and do is 'Reality-art'--not in the conventional sense of image-art that imitates or merely reproduces ordinary 'reality'…but in the sense of image-art that <u>intrinsically</u> egolessly coincides with Reality Itself." [41]

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The Last Supper, a perspectival fresco by Domenico Ghirlandaio,
Cenacolo di Ognissanti, Florence, Italy. Photo: Nick Elias

Center panel (Wednesday), *Alberti's Window I*, by Adi Da Samraj
(with *Vesica Piscis*)

Alberti's Window I, by Adi Da Samraj (54 inches x 559 inches) invites the viewer release point of view
based self-identity and to fall into a world constituted by "Primary Geometry" and "Primary Color" that is
free of the limiting, and ego-reinforcing force of perspective.

By intention, then, both the design and experience of Adi Da's aperspectival images are radically different from perspectival images such as Ghirlandaio's fresco, a fact which is powerfully evident in *Alberti's Window I (2006-7),* the largest (54 inches x 559 inches) example of Adi Da's geometric art to be included in the Florence exhibition. He explains: "I have given the title 'Alberti's Window' to the suite *Geome One* as a means of pointing out that the image-art I make and do is, in fact, <u>not</u> Alberti's kind of space, <u>not</u> the traditional space of Western art—which (first) 'objectifies' the surface of the artwork, and (then) uses various devices to draw the 'viewer' into the 'objectified' surface."[42]

To fully understand and experience this monumental work of art as intended, the viewer must first un-learn his or her prior understandings of the nature and purpose of art as well as his or her socially conditioned habits of art viewing.[43] At first glance, for example, one might be tempted to not really "see" *Alberti's Window I*, preferring simply to breeze by it, casually noting how it can be placed in its proper art historical category. Indeed, it is possible to observe formal resemblances between this image and similar works of a number of the masters of abstract modern art. But to see this, or any other work by Adi Da Samraj, merely as an exemplar of a type of art produced in the past would be to miss the life-changing experience he intended his viewer to have.[44] *Alberti's Window I*, like all of the other image-art he created over a period of some forty years,[45] is not merely a meaningless play of abstract forms and colors on a two dimensional surface.[46] Rather, it is a complex, paradoxical play between abstract form and fundamental meaning intended to create a vehicle for an ego-forgetting and ego-transcending aesthetic experience.[47]

Adi Da began the piece called *Alberti's Window I* by making photographs of the environment in which he lived, including views looking out of a window in his residence in Fiji. Using these images "as a visual starting point—like a sketchbook, and a key to unlock feeling memory"[48], he proceeded to make computer-generated images in response to the image-content of his photographic "sketches."[49] By means of a spontaneous response to each iteration of the developing image itself, he created over time an aperspectival work of art radically different from the visual world of Ghirlandaio's fresco. Thus, as he explains, "The imagery in *Alberti's Window* does not follow the 'rules' of perspective, nor does it presume the usual 'subject-object' orientation, as if actually looking through a window to 'outside'. In *Alberti's Window*, the surface itself is the domain of the event that is the image."[50]

While meaning is maintained, in part, by Adi Da's constant reference to the original photographs taken at the beginning of the process, the forms and colors of *Alberti's Window I* also embody the fundamental principles of what Adi Da calls "Reality Itself", which, according to him, is what the world is before it is perceived by any "point of view" of any self-contracting ego-"I". While it is clear why and how linear perspective makes use of geometry to create its spatio-temporal illusions, it is not so readily apparent why or how Adi Da Samraj used geometry to create order and meaning in his art.

Noting with approval that Cezanne, and various artists since Cezanne's time, have created art based on the use of primary geometries, Adi Da observes that, when fully and deeply experienced, the structure of human perception and the structure of the manifest

world itself are both rooted in the underlying presence and ceaseless play of primary forces and geometries.[51] He used geometry as his primary means of artistic expression in *Alberti's Window I,* and his other aperspectival geometric art, because he believed that this abstract formal language speaks wordlessly and universally to the underlying order of both self and world.[52] Thus, because *Alberti's Window I* is built out of the interplay of primary geometries, it is possible to tacitly feel, when standing in the presence of this monumental work, that one is perceiving a meaningful field of generative forces rather than a meaningless display of geometric forms.[53] One experiences in the geometric structure of this work the essence, rather than merely the outcome, of nature's processes of being and becoming.

But what of Adi Da's use of strong, radiant, and light-filled color in *Alberti's Window I*? Starting with his *Spectra Suites* in 2006, Adi Da exclusively used a palette of "pure" colors in order to orchestrate very specific effects: "A pure color is a vibration…a piece of the spectrum of visible light…Color is not arbitrary. It must be exactly right for each image in particular. Color has emotional force. Colors in relation to one another generate, by that relatedness, different modes, or tones, of emotional force."[54] He further explains that, like primary geometry, color also "has meaning in the nervous system, in the folds of the brain. That meaning is not something that can altogether be stated verbally, but meaning is inherent in color."[55] Thus, depending on the subject, each of his works of art required its own palette of colors.
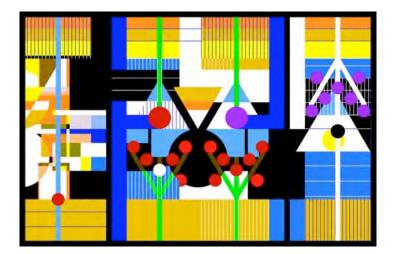
Alberti's Window I is constructed out of a full spectrum of pure and vibrant colors, which, like the crisp, precisely delineated geometries characteristic of the piece, are made possible by the use of digital technology and advanced methods of image fabrication.[56] Color values range from light to dark, and include hues ranging from cool tones at one end of the rainbow to warm ones at the other. Each color strikes a different note, giving rise to overtones and undertones of feeling-response and meaning-association. One finds, for example, dark shades of cobalt blue as well as airy tones of light-infused powder blue, in the cool end of the spectrum, that evoke feeling-images of ocean depths and endless skies. Robust, full-bodied hues of warm orange, various shades of golden yellow and intense, otherworldly reds trigger feeling-memories of spreading sunsets, the glowing radiance of evening fires, and the rich earthy tones of soil and rock. Woven amidst this complex field of geometrically structured, multi-layered and interacting colors, one also finds pure black and pure white.

Thus, even though one cannot literally see painted images of the primal elements of earth, air, fire and water, one can feel their presence. While *Alberti's Window I* is not representational, as in the case of such "realistic" paintings as *The Last Supper*, it does express at an archetypal level the all-pervading presence of the primal elements and shaping forces which are always at play in the constantly changing, self-regulating and dynamically balanced natural world.

But, remarkable as this accomplishment might be for any abstract geometric work of art, Adi Da, it will be remembered, claims much more for his images than the mere depiction of the deep structures and archetypal experiential qualities of cosmic nature. "My image-

First panel, *Alberti's Window I*

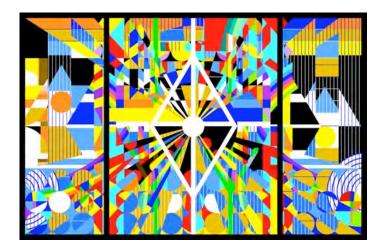Seventh and last panel, *Alberti's Window I*

Alberti's Window I

art is made and done to perceptually embody—and, thus, by means of the 'aesthetic experience', to communicate—the inherently egoless, non-separate, and indivisible Self-Nature, Self-Condition, Self-State, and Perfectly Subjective 'Space' That <u>Is</u> Reality Itself." [57]

Such a bold intention would suppose, at the very least, that the perceptible visual patterns, colors and subtle qualities of images such as *Alberti's Window I* would be homologous to what he describes as the very nature and structure of "Reality Itself." While words must always fail to describe that which cannot be said, Adi Da does indicate that "Reality Itself", or "That Which Is Always Already the Case" has, "no 'thing' in it, no 'other' in it, no separate 'self' in it, no ideas, no constructs in mind or perception, and, altogether, no 'point of view'."[58] Does Adi Da's art measure up to this standard? Does *Alberti's Window I* communicate a sense of non-separateness and the "irreducible paradox of unobservability and unknowability" that he claims is the "actual (Real) state of every one and every thing—even in the apparent context of all things arising."[59]

When first gazing upon *Alberti's Window I*, the mind and the mind's eye race to discover the hidden order that structures and, therefore, explains the power and beauty of the work. One wants to get a handle on it, figure it out, domesticate its strangeness, reduce its complexity to something simpler, something that can be named and known. And at first, it seems that it might be possible to do so. Yes, there are indeed organizing structures to be observed. First of all, one notices that the great length of the piece is divided into seven identically sized panels, each of which has a larger central panel and two smaller side panels. The central panel, which has two large multi-colored circles intersecting to create a large eye-like *vesica piscis*, appears at first glance to give the work a kind of overall symmetry. Yet, a closer look reveals that there is, in fact, no overall symmetry: the images to the left of the central triptych are more complex and less clearly ordered than the panels on the right of it, which are calmer, less brightly colored, more highly ordered and more figural. Thus, while each individual panel might remind one of the daily movement of the sun from morning to night, the temporal rhythm of the overall piece is directional as one moves from left to right, rising to a peak of balanced harmony in the center and falling back to a state of subdued calm and greater formal simplicity at the end. One senses in this pattern the presence of both circular time and linear time. With this insight, the thinking, grasping mind has something else to say about this enormous image, something else to hold on to.

Other formal ordering devices also can be noted and described. There are, for example, both horizontal and vertical regulating lines, which define fields and sub-fields where changes in geometry and color tend to occur. Certain form motifs repeat to give an overall sense of unity: radial patterns originating in central white circles dance across the length of the piece; fields of vertical stripes, containing multiple figure-ground color reversals unify the image in the vertical dimension; triangular forms and linear arrow-like motifs keep showing up, creating a sense of rising and falling forces; strongly colored red, yellow, white and blue circles of various sizes emerge as recurring figural forms, appearing at first to be clearly separate elements, only later to be seen as circular

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Second panel, *Alberti's Window I*

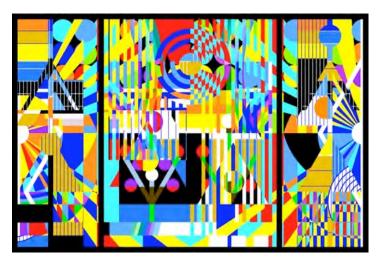Sixth panel, *Alberti's Window I*

Alberti's Window I

windows opening views into underlying, layered fields of color, which recede or advance according to the laws of color perspective.

The longer one spends with *Alberti's Window I*, however, the more it becomes evident that every apparent ordering system is always also inevitably undermined. Exceptions to the rule are the rule. Every instance of local order arises only to dissolve again into a playfully creative chaos, which is a paradoxical kind of order that can be felt but never fully described. Eventually, one comes to the conclusion that in *Alberti's Window I* there is order without system, in a work of art that is a living field of dynamically balanced polarities. Symmetry and asymmetry, cool colors and warm colors, horizontal lines and vertical lines, rising forces and falling forces, circular forms and angular forms, advancing colors and retreating colors, pure geometries and indefinable shapes are woven together to create an image that is never at rest, yet, always seems to be calm and centered. One slowly comes to the understanding that in *Alberti's Window I* there are, indeed, no separate forms, and that a mysterious sense of creative order and a prior, underlying unity are all-pervading.
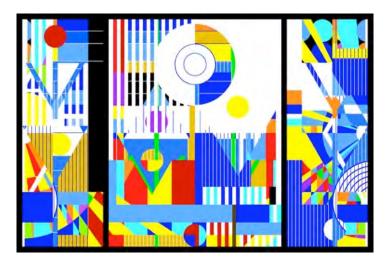
Finally, when the compulsive search for order, purpose and meaning falls completely away, and one simply becomes mindless in the face of the overwhelming size, seductive beauty and incomprehensible complexity of this monumental work of art, one discovers that *Alberti's Window I* cannot be defined or grasped by the mind's eye or the ego's "I". The only possible response that is left is to surrender, simply and spontaneously to the allure of the piece and to wander happily without any "point of view" in the dimensionless spaces of this primal landscape, which is a reality that is both familiar and strange. Forms are then felt with the "eyes of the skin"[60], colors are sensed as temperatures and qualities of being, and order is experienced as what Adi Da describes as a "non-necessary" and "non-binding" appearance arising out of an unseen reality both infinite and filled with light. In this realm and state, there is no time and there is no space. This experience brings a sense of freedom that is unthreatened and unthreatening. There is only pleasure and delight that spontaneously and naturally arises as soon as the frenzy of seeking and the need to name and control is forgotten. This is the experience that Adi Da describes as "aesthetic ecstasy", which was his true purpose in creating his art:

> The living body inherently wants to Realize (or <u>Be</u> One With) the Matrix of life. The living body always wants (with wanting need) to allow the Light of Perfect Reality into the "room". Assisting human beings to fulfill that impulse is what I would do by every act of image-art. My images are created to be a means for any and every perceiving, feeling, and fully participating viewer to "Locate" Fundamental and Really Perfect Light—the world As Light, conditional (or naturally perceived) light As Absolute Light.
>
> Ultimately, when "point of view" is transcended, there is no longer any "room" or (any separate "location" and separate "self") at all—but only Love-Bliss-"Brightness", limitlessly felt, in vast unpatterned Joy.[61]

18

Third panel, *Alberti's Window I*

Fifth panel, *Alberti's Window I*

Alberti's Window I

Wassily Kandinsky wrote in 1910-11 that "The great epoch of the Spiritual which is already beginning…provides and will provide the soil in which a kind of monumental work of art must come to fruition."[62] Were he alive today, Kandinsky might well consider the monumental art of Adi Da Samraj to be the fulfillment of the spiritual-artistic impulse that he and other revolutionary artists at the beginning of the twentieth century sought to bring into the world through the invention of abstract art. If properly understood and rightly and fully experienced, the aperspectival geometric art of Adi Da Samraj can be seen as a harbinger of a new age of consciousness and culture.

Endnotes

[1] For an excellent overview of the visual art of Adi Da Samraj, see Mei-Ling Israel, *The World as Light: An Introduction to the Art of Adi Da Samraj*, Middletown, CA: The Dawn Horse Press, 2007. Some of Adi Da's early photographic works can be seen in Adi Da Samraj, *The Bright Field: The Photographic Art of Adi Da Samraj*, Middletown, CA: The Dawn Horse Press, 2001. A selection of monumentally sized multiple-exposure images taken underwater can be seen in the exhibition catalogue, *Adi Da Samraj, The Quandra Loka Suite: 52 Views (The Indivisible Space of Conscious Light)*, Louis Stern Fine Arts, 2003. This beautifully produced volume also includes an illuminating essay on Adi Da's photographic art by noted critic Donald Kuspit. Adi Da's large format book, *The Spectra Suites*, New York and San Francisco: Welcome Press, 2007, presents works that integrate digitally generated images with those he has produced using still and video cameras. Donald Kuspit once again provides an incisive essay in this volume.

[2] Adi Da Samraj, *Transcendental Realism: The Image-Art of egoless Coincidence With Reality Itself*, Middletown, CA: The Dawn Horse Press, 2007, pg 34.

[3] Adi Da Samraj, *Perfect Philosophy: The "Radical" Way of No-Ideas*, Middletown, CA: The Dawn Horse Press, 2007, pg 40.

[4] Adi Da Samraj, "The Final Resolution of Geome, Linead, and Orphic Font", unpublished essay, November 25, 2008.

[5] Ibid.

[6] See the Venice Biennale exhibition catalogue, *Transcendental Realism: The Art of Adi Da Samraj*, Middletown, CA: The Dawn Horse Press, 2007. (With essays by Achille Bonito Oliva and exhibition Co-Curator Peter Frank as well as an artist's statement by Adi Da Samraj).

[7] See Margaret Wertheim, *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: From Dante to the Internet*, New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1999.

[8] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, Penguin Classics, 1991

[9] See Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr., *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry: Art and Science on the Eve of the Scientific Revolution*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993.

[10] For a particularly good explanation of Brunelleschi's demonstration of linear geometric perspective see Paul Feyerabend, *Conquest of Abundance: A Tale of Abstraction versus the Richness of Being*, Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1999, Chapter 4: Brunelleschi and the Invention of Perspective, pp 89-128. See also: Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr., *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry*, 1993, pp. 89, 94 and 105, and; Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr., *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective*, New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc., 1975, pp xvii, 5, 86, 90.

[11] For a penetrating interpretation of the relationship between love, beauty and death implied by Alberti's story about Narcissus and the origin and import of painting see Karsten Harries, *The Broken Frame,* Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press, 1989, pp 12-18.

[12] In 1267 the Franciscan monk Roger Bacon wrote *Opus Majus*, a book dedicated to Pope Clement IV that was intended to be a compendium of all knowledge. Bacon argued that realism in art, achieved through the application of the laws of optics and geometry, could create religious images that would look so physically real that people would believe that they were actually looking at the events recounted in the gospels. By means of such "geometric figuring" in the arts, viewers would "rejoice in contemplating the spiritual and literal meaning of Scripture…which the bodies themselves sensible to our eyes would exhibit." As quoted

in Margaret Wertheim, *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace*, op. cit., pp 91, 92. While Bacon, of course, had never seen images created by means of linear geometric perspective because it had not yet been invented, his theological arguments did create an intellectual and religious climate within which the new geometric art, as first evident in the art of the Florentine painter Giotto, could take root and spread throughout Christendom from the thirteenth century on. For a more detailed account of the role of perspective in these great transformations in culture and consciousness, see: Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr., *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective*, op. cit., pp 16-31.

[13] The story of how the theocratic Medieval worldview was gradually replaced by the materialistic worldview of the "clockwork universe", which is still the dominant paradigm of everyday life today, reveals much about the ways in which art, science and religion are intertwined in a complex web of mutual cause and effect. It also illustrates that changes which occur in a culture's art are able to affect great processes of cultural and social transformation. See Edgerton, Jr., *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry*, op. cit., and Wertheim, op. cit.

[14] See Karsten Harries, *The Broken Frame*, op. cit.

[15] In Adi Da's writings, Narcissus is the central symbol of the ego-"I", the self-obsessed seeker. "Not only is Narcissus separate and isolated—he is (entirely, and perpetually) concentrated in an illusion. Apart from true…self-understanding, all human beings are exactly like that. There is the persistent avoidance of relationship, the constant self-contraction, the exclusive meditation upon the subjective reflection of events, the endless thinking, the endless motivation for the 'point'-of-view of the ego (the presumed 'place' of perception and cognition), such that there is no <u>Real</u> perception, no <u>Real</u> knowledge. When you look at something with your eyes, you are looking from this 'point'. … You never 'locate' … the Source-Condition of these perceptions… therefore, you never discover that you are not the 'point' of perception, that you are … <u>not</u> separate (or 'different') from perception itself and everything that is perceived." Adi Da Samraj, *My "Bright" Word*, Middletown, CA: the Dawn Horse Press, 2005, pg 312. For an account of how Adi Da discovered the hidden logic and dark mythic power of egoity as an always present activity of narcissistic self contraction see his spiritual autobiography, Adi Da Samraj *The Knee of Listening: The Divine Ordeal of the Avataric Incarnation of Conscious Light,* Middletown, CA: The Dawn Horse Press, 2004, pp 94-96.

[16] Adi Da Samraj, *Perfect Abstraction,* Middletown, CA: The Dawn Horse Press, 2008, pg 14.

[17] Ibid., pg 14.

[18] As he surveyed these and many other related changes in the western world of his time, Swiss philosopher and cultural historian Jean Gebser (1905-1973) had a sudden "lightning-like realization" in 1933 that what he was witnessing was the emergence of a radically new form of consciousness, which he called the *aperspectival/integral consciousness structure*. See Jean Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1949/1985. It is important to point out, however, that what Adi Da calls "aperspectival" consciousness and art is radically different from what Gebser means by the same terms. Fundamentally, Gebser is still communicating a "point-of-view"-based philosophy and psychology. By contrast Adi Da's Transcendental Realist art is "anegoic", and "aniconic" as well as "aperspectival". Gebser is unable to distinguish between "multi-perspectival" art and truly "aperspectival" art in the sense communicated by Adi Da.

[19] For a fascinating and illuminating look at the relationship between science and art, and in particular, between post-Newtonian physics and modern art, see Leonard Shlain, *Art & Physics: Parallel Visions in Space, Time & Light*, New York, NY: William Morrow, and Company, Inc., 1991.

[20] For a beautifully illustrated and thorough account of the spiritual impulse that was seeking expression in modern abstract art in the twentieth century see, Maurice Tuchman (ed.), *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*, New York, NY: Abbeville Press, 1986.

[21] For a detailed and lively account of many aspects of this Modernist revolution at the end of the 19th and the beginnings of the 20th century see, William R. Everdell, *The First Moderns*, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1997, as well as; Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983, and; Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1981.

[22] While observing that some "good art continued to be made in the second half of the twentieth century by certain unique individuals" Adi Da argues that "in general, following World War II, there was a general breakdown in the culture of art, reflecting the breakdown in the civilization-culture of the world altogether." See Adi Da Samraj, *Transcendental Realism: The Image-Art of egoless Coincidence With Reality Itself*, Middletown, CA: The Dawn Horse Press, 2007, pp 68-69.

[23] Postmodern nihilism and despair are nicely summarized in Mary Settegast, *Mona Lisa's Mustache: Making Sense of a Dissolving World*, Grand Rapids: MI: Phanes Press, 2001. For a similar critique of the first half of the twentieth century see, René Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, New Delhi, India: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000.

[24] For an insightful assessment of the nature of postmodern reality from a variety of competing and, perhaps, complementary perspectives, see, Mary Settegast, *Mona Lisa's Mustache*, op. cit. For a positive spin on the phenomena of the postmodern world see, Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality Isn't What it Used to Be*, San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1990. See also, Michael Roemer, *Telling Stories: Postmodernism and the Invalidation of Traditional Narrative*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995; Paul Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, Minneapolis, Minnesota: The University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

[25] See Adi Da Samraj, *Perfect Abstraction*, op. cit., pp 20-22.

[26] To many cultural critics, this condition gives rise to an almost universal sense of spiritual dis-ease and existential anxiety that expresses itself in addictive patterns of production and consumption, widespread environmental destruction and desperate nativistic and fundamentalist revolts aimed at holding back the flow of time and returning to the imagined certainties of previous golden ages. As the dialectical conflict between "Jihad and McWorld" threatens to plunge the entire planet into an endless war of all against all, many people feel trapped in a tunnel of despair from which there appears, at this moment in history, to be no escape. For a brilliant account of the social and political situation confronting the postmodern world, see Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World*, Ballantine Books, 1996.

[27] Adi Da Samraj, *Perfect Abstraction*, op. cit., pg 22.

[28] As Adi Da Samraj explains in *Perfect Abstraction* (pp 15-16.):"The various modes of avant-garde image-art in the 'modernist' period arose out of—and, to a lesser or greater degree, in reaction to—the Western tradition of perspectival image-art. Arising out of this background, 'modernist' avant-garde image-art played on the notion of 'point-of-view'-perception—investigating various different modes of making image-art in an apparently non-perspectival manner, modes that were intended to (in one or another manner) break free of 'point of view', but, nevertheless, always preserving 'point of view' itself as the core 'subject'. The 'modernist' project of achieving liberation form 'point of view' (and liberation from the perception of the world constructed by 'point of view') never came to a full resolution. Certain core issues remained to be dealt with. Those issues had to do, principally, with how to make art that transcends 'point of view' <u>absolutely</u>—rather than only partially, or only by the effort of irony and seeming. …The image-art I make and do directly addresses and (thoroughly and, at last, completely) resolves <u>all</u> issues inherent in the consideration of <u>absolutely</u> transcending 'point of view'."

[29] Adi Da Samraj, *Perfect Abstraction,* op. cit., pg 16.

[30] Commenting on the dark and darkening mood that now grips postmodern societies, Adi Da makes the case for the necessity of recovering a life-positive, ego-transcending orientation: "The fundamental (and, heretofore, perennial) great disposition that must now be universally retrieved is the disposition to exceed the limitations of mortality, egoity and gross existence altogether. That disposition is the right and true and necessary domain of right and true art, and, altogether, of right and true culture. The 'world'-culture of humankind as a whole needs to become re-oriented now—away from its 'meditation' on the downward spiral into darkness and the myths of 'end-time', and profoundly toward the disposition that would transcend <u>all</u> limitations." Adi Da sees his art as serving this great transformation. "The image-art I make and do is intended to serve the 'aesthetic experience' of greatest profundity and of intrinsic transcending of all limitations." He observes that "The artistic manifestations of such a re-newed culture of inspiration will not necessarily look the same as art made in the past." Indeed, commenting on his own boldly unconventional art, Adi Da says that his work is not in any way religious art. "My image-art is made and done in the intrinsically free disposition that otherwise characterizes the fundamental manner of means that can be seen throughout the 'modern' and (so-called) 'post-modern' periods. However, in the image-art I

make and do all kinds of free means that I have originated and developed are being put to use in the context of a unique disposition relative to doing art, and a unique understanding of the purpose of art. That purpose could be described as the 'radical' (or always 'at-the-root') uplifting of the human dispositon—out of the grossest course of conventional 'realism', and out of egoic (or space-time-'located', and divisibility-driven, and 'point-of-view'-bound) 'self'-delusion, and out of the absurdities of anti-beauty, and out of the 'dark'-minded determination to crush the 'aesthetic experience'." Adi Da Samraj, *Aesthetic Ecstasy*, op. cit., pp 45-46.

[31] Adi Da Samraj, *Transcendental Realism: The Image-Art of egoless Coincidence with Reality Itself*, pg 70.

[32] Adi Da Samraj, *Perfect Abstraction*, op. cit., pg 16.

[33] Ibid., pg 16.

[34] Ibid., pp 16-17.

[35] In medieval Christian art, for example, this meant that gold leaf was used to fill the space between flatly rendered and stylized figures from the Bible that were used to portray stories from the Bible. The size and placement of each figure signified their importance as well as their place within the myth, or story being portrayed.

[36] See Margaret Wertheim, *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet*, op. cit., pp 86-87.

[37] Adi Da Samraj, *Perfect Abstraction*, op. cit., pg 17.

[38] Ibid., pg 17.

[39] Unlike Brunelleschi's painting in the Baptistery, which placed the station point (or viewer's eye of the painting at the same point where the viewer actually stood, the station point of Ghirlandaio's fresco is raised above the floor of the refectory. Thus, it is not possible for the viewer actually to stand at the point where station point and vanishing point coincide in the painting. One has to imagine that, if one were standing on the floor of the painting, it would be possible to have the kind of experience of the coincidence of physical self and "virtual" self that Brunelleschi offered to his astonished volunteers. Already, by 1480, however, when Ghirlandaio's work was completed, Renaissance artists and their audiences had learned that illusions of realistic spaces could be created that were, in effect, views from bodily displaced points of view. This was a crucial step in the development of modern scientific conceptions of the universe as an infinitely extendable, homogeneous space. As Wertheim observes, "… while perspective painting began by embodying a 'point of view', it ultimately became once again a means for distancing the viewer from his or her body…. By creating a virtual eye that was, in effect, free to roam about space on its 'own', this later phase of perspective provided people with a powerful psychological experience of *extended physical space as a thing in itself*." (pp 114, 116) Thus, while artists in the Renaissance still believed in the Aristotelian conception of space, which abhorred the idea of space as an infinite void, the perspectival art they were creating was giving everyone who viewed it an actual experience of such a reality. According to Edgerton, in *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry*, without the revolution in seeing created by painters from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, it would not have been possible for Galileo and Descartes and other physicists and philosophers of the seventeenth centuries to conceive of a new, mechanistic and materialistic scientific world picture. See Wertheim, pp 76-117, for a carefully documented and well-argued summary of the role of perspective in the creation of Cartesian/Newtonian conceptions of space and reality.

[40] Adi Da Samraj, *Perfect Abstraction*, op. cit., pg 19.

[41] Adi Da's "Reality-art" must be understood as the result of a "profound philosophical and Spiritual preparation." He says that only after decades of the most intensive consideration was he able to discover "the means to go through and beyond all traditional and ego-based modes of thinking and understanding", making it possible to finally make images "on an intrinsically and entirely "point-of-view"-less basis." As quoted in Adi Da Samraj, *Perfect Abstraction*, pg 16.

[42] Adi Da Samraj, *Aesthetic Ecstasy*, pg 31.

[43] As Adi Da says, "My image-art can be characterized as a paradoxical space that undermines "point of view". That undermining (which occurs in any instant of fully felt participation in any of the images I make and show) allows for a tacit glimpse, or intuitive sense, of the Transcendental Condition of Reality (even as all conditional appearances, and, Ultimately As It Is)—always, inherently, and totally <u>beyond</u> and <u>prior</u> to

'point of view'." Adi Da Samraj, *Transcendental Realism: The Image-Art of egoless Coincidence With Reality Itself*, op. cit., pg 53.

[44] "By viewing *Alberti's Window I* in this art-historical manner, I, along with even all artists who make and do images in the geometric abstractionist mode, am eased into a convenient position in the historical sequence of academically defined space and time. Such a manner of viewing image-art is, ultimately, a choice to 'objectify', control and be indifferent toward the perceptually-based opportunity of profundity that image-art is". Adi Da Samraj, *Aesthetic Ecstasy*, op. cit., , pp 14-15.

[45] Adi Da argues that even though his art is abstract, meaning is intrinsic to it: indeed, he claims that each of his works produced over a period of more than forty years, from his Zen-like brush paintings and multiple exposure photography to his more recent computer-generated imagery, expresses a fundamental tension between abstract form and meaning. For an excellent survey of Adi Da's entire artistic production to date, see Mei-Ling Israel, *The World As Light: An Introduction to the Art of Adi Da Samraj*, Middletown, CA, op. cit. For an explanation of the relationship between form and meaning in his work see Adi Da Samraj, *Transcendental Realism: The Image-Art of egoless Coincidence With Reality Itself*, op. cit., pg 55.

[46] Adi Da explains that he makes art that "embodies a disposition that transcends both the 'new' view of image-art as 'surface only' and the 'old' view…of the image as a perspectively-organized 'window on the world'." See Adi Da Samraj, *Aesthetic Ecstasy*, pg 14.

[47] Adi Da Samraj, *Transcendental Realism: The Image-Art of egoless Coincidence With Reality Itself*, op. cit., pg 55.

[48] Adi Da Samraj, *Aesthetic Ecstasy*, op. cit., pg 32.

[49] As was the case with all his digitally fashioned art, Adi Da was assisted by a team of computer technicians staffing multiple computers. He would give precise instructions about what he wanted done in terms of the form and color of the image until he felt that the work was completely resolved. In this way of working, nothing stood in the way of his ability to be completely immersed in the spontaneous process of image development.

[50] Adi Da Samraj, *Aesthetic Ecstasy*, op. cit., pg 32.

[51] Based on his own direct meditative experience Adi Da reports that "if the deep process whereby the brain makes perception happen is profoundly felt and (thus) understood, then it can also be understood that the basis of the natural world's construction as perceptual experience is primary geometry, or elemental shape—curved, linear, and angular." Not only is the perceptual process so structured, but he also observes that "The natural world itself is (inherently) a self-morphing and self-limiting <u>construction</u> (or a naturally improvised and spontaneously self-organizing art-form), formalized and fabricated by means of a plastic interaction between primary forces and structures… Everything perceived is a structure that demonstrates the interaction of these three all-patterning forces of shape". See Adi Da Samraj, *Transcendental Realism: The Image-Art of egoless Coincidence With Reality Itself*, pp 55-56.

[52] The reason we don't normally perceive that this is the case, Adi Da explains, is because of the inconceivable complexity of the interactions of primary geometries characteristic of the natural, material world, which create an appearance of rounded softness when seen by the natural eye. (see *The World as Light*, op. cit. pg 99, and *Transcendental Realism: The Image-Art of egoless Coincidence With Reality Itself*, pg 56) Adi Da states, however, that even if it is not possible directly to perceive the fecund and generative presence of primary geometries in nature, "it is altogether possible to tacitly feel that whatever is actually being perceived in any moment is something structured in the primary geometric manner, and that (consequently) all apparent complexity is based on very simple primary elements." As quoted in *Transcendental Realism: The Image-Art of egoless Coincidence With Reality Itself*, op. cit., pg 56.

[53] In an essay called "My Working Principles of Image-Art", in his book *Transcendental Realism: The Image-Art of egoless Coincidence With Reality Itself*, Adi Da summarizes twelve ways by which meaning in his art is constituted through abstract geometrical form. Several are worth quoting in order to clarify assertions made in the main text of this essay. "5. The image-whole is meaningful form; 6. Meaningful form is always a <u>play</u> upon the intrinsic aesthetic laws of pattern that are inherent to the human brain and nervous system, and that underlie all aspects of human perception, cognition, and action; 8. The formal characteristics of the image-totality are a play between two modes of motion (or of patterning tendency)—

the motions that are tending toward symmetry and the motions that are tending toward asymmetry; 9. The finally realized image-whole is a <u>balanced</u> resolution of the inherent conflict between symmetry and asymmetry…; 10. Within the formal (or meaningfully formalizing) elements of the image-play are characteristics of polar opposition in mutual dynamic association…; 11. The finally realized image-whole is, necessarily a unified whole, a perceptual order that is characterized by an equanimity that demonstrates a realized balance of and between (or in the context of) all the opposites within the meaning-field and the image-plane; 12. The finally realized image-whole is, necessarily, a perceptual demonstration of (both) the root-principle of the <u>prior</u> unity of all conditionality <u>and</u> the Transcendental Principle of the Primal Equanimity of Reality Itself…" pp 45-46.

[54] Mei-Ling Israel, *The World as Light*, op. cit., pg 96.

[55] Adi Da Samraj, as quoted in *The World As Light*, ibid., pg 96.

[56] Adid Da Samraj, ibid., pg 95.

[57] Adi Da Samraj, *Aesthetic Ecstasy*, pg 39.

[58] Adi Da Samraj, *Transcendental Realism: The Image-Art of egoless Coincidence With Reality Itself*, op. cit., pp 56, 57.

[59] Adi Da Samraj, ibid., pp 56-57.

[60] For an insightful and inspiring essay on the negative effects of the dominance of the visual sense in contemporary architecture and culture, and the need to create an environment that speaks to all the senses see, Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, Wiley-Academy, 2005.

[61] Adi Da Samraj, *Transcendental Realism: The Image-Art of egoless Coincidence With Reality Itself, op. cit., pg 57.*

[62] As quoted in Maurice Tuchman (ed.), *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*, op. cit., pg 11.

Photographs of Adi Da Samraj in his studio and images of his visual art provided by Da Plastique (see www.daplastique.com. and www.adidabiennale.org.

"I Am Manifesting the self-organizing force of Reality in the context of perception and communication—and, therefore, of images"

-Adi Da Samraj