

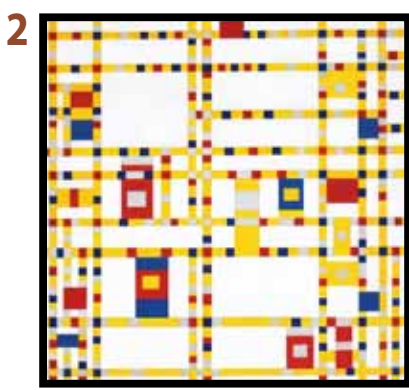
The Square, Geometry, and Chaos Theory

For years I had an association with a teaching colleague who had a curious mind, and who believed geometry played an extensive underlying role in all art. He spent a lot of his life pursuing the concept of geometrically organized compositions in the representational art of the Renaissance, and he explored it further into later periods of art spending hours of time analyzing photographs of artworks with overlays and geometric shapes to explain the structure beneath these paintings. What always struck me about his analyses was the irrelevance he failed to acknowledge between the finished work and the post-painting so-called geometric underpinnings. I always felt that any finished work of art, with some imagination, could quite subjectively be divided up into a geometric pattern of some sort.

This, to my mind, is not usually the artist's primary intent. Order and composition are formed in the mind's eye using many tools of composition, including *light, dark, color, texture, line, mass, space, repetition, symmetry, asymmetry, subject, and media* to name a handful. So whether I am using Euclidian geometry to analyze a simulated three-dimensional space in Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus*, the two-dimensional space of Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, or the actual-dimensional materials of Eva Hesse's *Metronomic Irregularity* (1,2,3 Below) the artist's true intention is to find a connection with the viewer.



1 The story behind the painting by Eugene Delacroix may be one understood by the masses; a depiction of opulence, decadence, resignation and slaughter, in an untethered space with a lack of solid architecture that defines the mood.*



2 Mondrian created a flat space that stimulates our eyes as they move from squares of primary color to other squares and seem to shift and veritably simulate moving lights on a Times Square theatre marquee.



3 Eva Hesse used industrial and ordinary found materials, such as rope, string, wire, rubber, and fiberglass to show us a poetic collaboration of disparate elements often started from a geometric beginning where each disordered strand migrates across an empty void from one grid point to another point on a similar grid marked panel.**

I have a long personal connection with geometry in my own art, and for some reason, I have often wondered why a large proportion of my artwork shows an affinity to the square—which of course is a perfect symmetrical shape, like the circle that it is intimately derived from. I can't explain why so much of my work has developed in this way, and in some regards I considered it a subconscious limitation that I placed upon myself, perhaps—out of doubt, compositional insecurity, lack of creativity, utilitarian expediency—who knows!? What I find interesting is that many artists who I admire, are those who have escaped the "dominion of the geometric frame", or those who escape obvious symmetrical solutions within the frame.

Franz Kline, Eva Hesse, Robert Motherwell, Louise Nevelson, Frank Stella, Cy Twombly and so many more feed my artistic soul.

So now, I am trying to push myself beyond the restrictions of geometric form by exploring ways to diminish its importance in each new work. What you might see in the studio shot below represents peripatetic attempts to free myself from some of my symmetrical constraints of the past. This is not easy.

Even though internal shapes and structural elements may suggest otherwise, my efforts are now akin to "chaos theory" and the fractal nature of our universe. Every decision I make, creates new and exciting possibilities as I develop the same eight identical pre-coated Masonite shapes into the artworks in process below. After that? Perhaps, add another element—like subtle softened edges to blur the shapes! Then?—perhaps color! After that?—maybe add surface contrast with texture, lustre, or even collage or drawn components!

Every decision spawns new possibilities. In nature, Chaos Theory is called design by "Natural Selection". In my art, the concept of chaos is somewhat controlled. Chaos Theory for me therefore, is design by "Intuitive Selection"! —BB



* <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/great-works/great-works-the-death-of-sardanapalus-1827-eugegravene-delacroix-2015856.html>

** <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-hesse-eva.htm> (Copy these links into your browser for more information)