



April 8 – May 8, 2016, Club 157

## Artifacts of the Descendants : Jonathan Kopp *from the artist...*

This show, "Artifacts of the Descendants" is a project under the umbrella of a much larger work. The "Continuity/Singularity" project has been my work for years and will continue for many years to come. It is a project in what I call "Applied Religion Design", and was born from the ashes of the deepest possible despair as an attempt to answer a simple question:

"Why don't you imagine a God you can believe in?"

You see, in the summer of 2005 I was dying.

I alternated between sick wakeful terror and waking oblivion. I was possessed, and had no hope. In short order my limbic system, my psyche, my soul had all been co-opted by an inescapable obsession with ethyl alcohol. I had become homeless. I was beaten and abused and was prone to lapsing into alcohol-induced seizures.

I sank off the grid into the underworld of the institutionalized. I could not stop drinking and became subhuman. Yet I reached out for help where I could, and never stopped struggling to reconnect with humanity and return to life.

Maybe that's how I was able to survive until Everything Changed.

I was asked the question above as a challenge given by a kind counselor in a cinder-block state-funded rehab facility (my fourth). As an atheist and a humanist I had struggled desperately with the "God" rhetoric endemic to recovery programs. This kind woman and her question opened my eyes. She me a weapon I could use to fight to live. I wrote and sketched, and imagined, and created. I drew on all the science my father had instilled in me, and the art my mother had kindled in me. I devoured books on topics ranging from the the Burgess Shale to the Soviet space program to Greco-Buddhist city-states in central Asia in the time of Alexander the Great. Soon enough I was able to put my addiction in remission.

In time I conceived of not one God but two complementary Goddesses:

Continuity, the goddess of deep time, evolution, of four billion unbroken years of life on this planet, of fertility and procreation.

It is she, I imagined, who put us on the Earth.

Singularity, on the other hand, is the goddess of all that is unique, unprecedented, new. She is the goddess of art, technology, language and sexuality.

It is she, I imagined, who put us on the Moon.

I have dedicated my life and my energies to exploring what it was that came in to fill the void. Did some recognition return to me of the deep continuity of billions of years of intricate life on Earth? Did a sudden understanding strike me of the singularity of human potential and the eons that lie ahead of us in our destination—the stars? Perhaps I became infused by the loving-kindness of all those who held me up and kept me moving back to life? After all, they had shown me that people could find a way—with love and service—to quicken life into dead hopeless eyes.

What I came to believe is that it was all of these things and much more.

In recent years, encouraged by such artists as Ventiko and her Animamus Salon comrades, Carrie Mae Rose, and others, I have worked to shape the concept into images, symbols, colors, words, sounds, dance, and more.

In the summer of 2015 I was asked by Ventiko to create an installation and companion performance piece based on my project. In imagining a way to depict Continuity/Singularity in physical form I was struck by a question: What would a tribal people who followed these deities look like? Thus was "Artifacts of the Descendants" conceived. I imagined a group of people living in the far future, clinging to life in the interior of the asteroid 16 Psyche—a mountain of nickel-iron alloy in space.

In this exhibition—germinated in the Animamus' "Sanctum Sanctorum" residency at Gallery Sensei and nurtured and grown here at Gallery 157—you will see "artifacts" of their spiritual practice; as well as images of their spiritual guides and seers as well as of the people themselves. You will see samples of their imagined art, and depictions of their mythography.

In this vein I choreographed and will perform a piece of "ritual theater" depicting the myth of the "Demon Core"—a terrible figure of destruction that finds enlightenment in Singularity and in an aspiration to the stars.

I have ultimately come to believe that it is not just I who was (and am) at a pivotal moment: it is our whole civilization as well. We have staggering answers to ancient questions. We have new questions, deeper and wiser ones. The mere decades in which the current generations now live will be those in which we make the critical decisions regarding what we humans choose to become—or if we even choose to survive.

We are a species with new tools. We have new ways to create meaning and new methods of culturemaking.

For those of us who have been entrusted with the experience and inclination to take up these tools I believe there is nothing more imperative.

This is my small contribution.

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