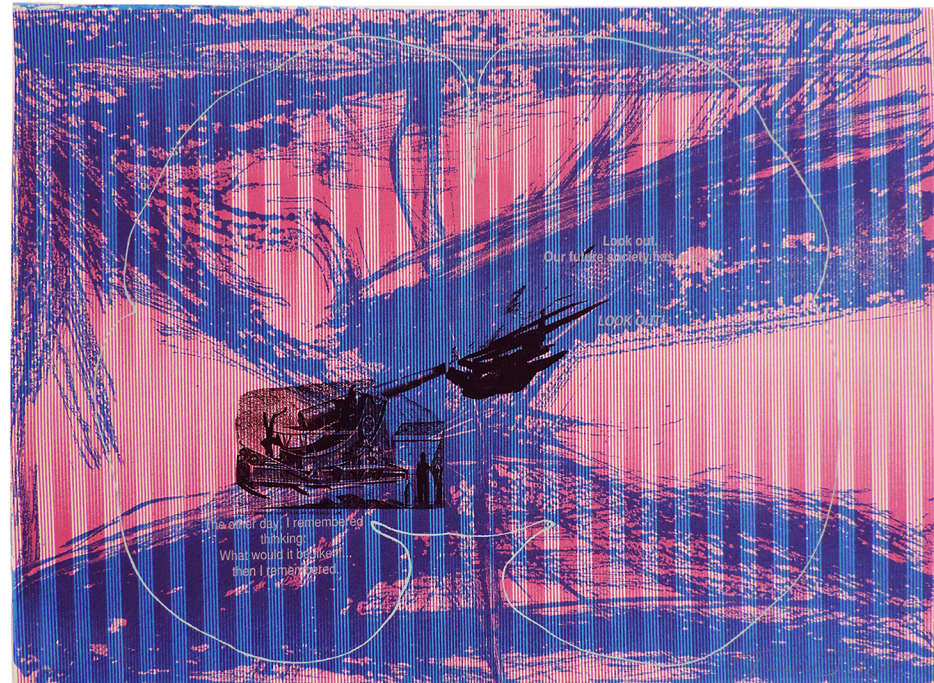


Mind Icon #1: "Influences"



Mind Icon #2: "Look Out. LOOK OUT!"



Mind Icon #3: "Building Communication"



Mind Icon #11: "Submerging Our Fears & Pleasures"



Mind Icon #10: "Exiting Plato's Cave"



Mind Icon #5: "No More Mindless Actions!"

Todd Siler Mind Matters

September 12 - November 21, 2019

Opening Reception
Thursday, September 12 from 4 - 7 p.m.

"Metaphorming Minds: Envisioning the Possibilities of Nature"
Discussion with the Artist and Exhibition Curator, Simon Zalkind

The Art Gallery
Fulginiti Pavilion for Bioethics and Humanities
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus
13080 East 19th Avenue, Aurora, Colorado 80045
Tel. 303-724-3994
Map and directions at: www.coloradobioethics.org

Gallery Hours
9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday - Friday.
Free and open to the public.

 Center for Bioethics and Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Fulginiti Pavilion for Bioethics and Humanities
13080 East 19th Avenue • Aurora, Colorado 80045



Mind Icon: Mirroring Beauty & Truth (1995) Nambé metal alloy, 24" x 30" x 20"
(Coronal and Sagittal cross-sectional views of the human brain at the level of the Thalamus.)
The Brain /s What The Brain Creates. Its workings reflect the workings of all its creations.
The Mind Creates "Processmorphs": Things that are alike in process, but unlike in form or appearance.

Todd Siler Mind Matters

"I make art about the brain, and learn about the brain through art." – Todd Siler

The human brain is a biological construction of maddening, mysterious and elusive complexity. But as the neuro-scientific revolution has progressed, it has also become a cultural icon with symbolic and metaphoric associations providing a rich source of imagery and ideas for contemporary artists. Todd Siler is among the most ambitious and prominent among them. He produces, in a wide variety of mediums, extravagantly beautiful visual objects whose seductions are independent of their neural-scientific sources. However, at the center of his project is his multi-dimensional understanding of the centrality of the brain for all human endeavor and for the entire range of human experience and aspiration – aesthetic, emotional, philosophic, and environmental. The implications are staggering. As Siler states, "Every problem we encounter today is brain-related...created and resolved by this compact network of neural tissue that's perched on everyone's shoulder." In the process of organizing this exhibition, Siler and I have had many conversations about the philosophical, ethical, spiritual and affective dimensions of his assertions. Is the brain where the "I" abides? Are notions of free will, choice, empathy, love, imagination, "subjectivity," simply the consequence of genetically determined hard-wiring? – adaptations of the brain to respond to environment and experience? I hope that Siler and I will continue to argue and explore these issues together for a long time. They elude any easy resolution. However, when it comes to "cultural input" – the experience of art - Siler and I both agree that it is intimately fused in the deep labyrinths of the human brain. The assertion (fact?) that art has a solid biological foundation unites the views of modern neurobiologists with those of Michelangelo, Mondrian, Cezanne, Matisse – and Todd Siler.

Given Siler's strong foundation in cognitive and neural sciences, it's surprising to experience the fact that the works in this exhibition do not rely – as one might expect – on dazzling digital or technological manipulations. Siler is a polymath, and his art is informed by an astonishing level of sophistication in an enormous range of disciplines. However, his art-making techniques and his stylistic allegiances are refreshingly traditional. He paints on paper and canvas. He utilizes printmaking techniques that are centuries old. His sculptures are made of metal and function as discrete art-objects in a gallery environment. The calligraphic elements present in so many of Siler's works unite them to the notebooks of Da Vinci. His use of color and gesture can appear comfortably familiar in an art-historical context and suggest an oblique dialogue with so much of the art of the 20th and 21st centuries. Many Abstract Expressionist painters, for example, were also attempting to bypass the reigning philosophical logic that divides the mind from the embodied aspect of lived experience, looking instead towards the possibility of more integrated, holistic strategies for creating art – strategies that

restore us to the biological immediacy of sensation which becomes coherent when the brain assigns it meaning, utility and value. In Siler's art, science exists in a tangled relationship with beauty, and the power of his art is that that we can see this even if we don't always understand what we're looking at. These works emerge from his sustained observation within the methodologies of scientific research but also from his imagination – the brain, after all, contains the key to dreams. It would be surprising if the serious scientific study of art did not give us some insights into how the brain is organized. Conversely, as Siler demonstrates, the study of the brain provides substantial evidence that our appreciation of art – our responsiveness to "beauty" in general – can be correlated directly with activity in specialized areas of the brain.

In the May 1987 issue of *Artforum* critic Patricia Phillips wrote the following:

We all know that the human brain creates many marvelous and menacing things, but Siler's work transforms this fact into an idea of great consequence. He manages to evoke in us a palpable sense of wonder at the strange and delicate operations within the mind. The world does not exist independent of human cognition or symbolic activity. Siler's drawings and paintings do not suggest some a priori reality. He makes the idea of "world-making" visually concrete. He depicts through a recursive and additive vocabulary what others are just now attempting to describe.

As Phillips implies, Siler's art not only embraces and celebrates the natural sciences and their materialist framework but also suggests that our understanding of the "natural" is at the brink of a profound expansion. As far as I can determine, "science" is still far from providing a final answer to our deepest questions about subjectivity, love, consciousness/awareness, play, and the meaning(s) we attribute to the experience of being a being. Siler is a perfect narrator, host and guide here. His work strikes a terrific balance between pure visual seduction and a precisely informed knowledge of the exquisite capacities of the brain – an evolutionary triumph of neural engineering – to seek connection, creativity, discovery and the unifying capacities of imagination, of "wonderment."

Simon Zalkind, Curator

Artist's Statement

My art envisions the human mind as an embodiment of nature's creative process. It explores how the mind can connect everything it creates, producing new meanings and purposes for all things.

What's the most urgent global challenge today? Climate change? Or *changing minds*? Learning how we can change by adapting to our ever-changing natural and built environments? Actually, both depend on our understanding of the brain/mind--challenging the limits of our knowledge.

Everything we've created since the beginning of time is a product of the human brain and its creative process. How exactly, no one knows for certain. And yet, we intuitively know that *every thing* human-made reflects the brain's handiwork.

Every *thing*: from concepts of "zero" to "infinity"; from processes of Prehistoric Art to practices of Postmodern Art; from existential theories of "nothingness" to mathematical theories of "everything"; from philosophies of peace to businesses of war, love and death.

Every problem and challenge we encounter is brain-related. Every solution and opportunity we create as individuals, families, teams, groups, organizations and nations are conceived by this compact network of neural tissue that's perched on everyone's shoulder.



Brain Icon: Peace of Mind Pacifying Aggression (1990) White light hologram envisioning how the neural mechanisms of thought reflect the contents of thought. (Coronal section of the human brain at the level of the Thalamus.)

Every day, truth-seekers of all ages, cultures, backgrounds and perspectives search for insights into this infinitely puzzling "thinking tissue" that shapes and influences our lives. In fact, today we've boosted our capabilities by utilizing deep-learning thinking machines that aid human creativity, expanding the possibilities of our reality.

The brain beckons us to seek-and-see truths: to know ourselves as deeply as possible—as though our lives and future depend on it. Which they do. All the time.

Improving the state of the world and the human condition are "conditional." Either human beings care enough to learn how to learn, which includes practicing empathy by acting compassionately, or we accept the brutal reality of just the opposite situation: indifference, fear, ignorance, intolerance, and stupidity, which yield chronic conflicts and constant wars. Before we collapse. Again.

The first option is sustainable. The second isn't.

Ultimately, curiosity sparks creativity, enabling imagination to wonder: Will an open-mind always remain curious---imagining the possibility of anything while questioning everything?