

# CENTRIPETAL ART

The term “Centripetal Art” refers both to a body of contemporary art work created with a unique set of sensibilities, intentions and aspirations; and to the philosophy of art which informs those works.

Centripetal art is created in the belief that both the artist and the viewer have a “center” - a “soul” - and that authentic art moves from the soul of the artist to the soul of the viewer. It is also deeply committed to the notion of transcendence: to the progression from darkness to light, and to the possibility that a particular work of art, which we can see and touch, is a window into eternity.

The term does not refer to any subcategory of art because all works of art are potentially “centripetal”: what matters is whether the artist directly encounters his subject with a full soul, and whether, through the process of creating, he himself strives for and reaches transcendence.

The term “centripetal art” was coined by the contemporary artist, JUNKO CHODOS [1]. It is borrowed from physics: centripetal force is the force that impels things or parts of a thing inward, towards the center of rotation. It is the opposite of “centrifugal” - which is the force that pushes things outward from a center of rotation. Starting in the early 1990s, the Artist had begun to write and give public lectures about topics fundamental to centripetal art, but she did not coin the term until 1998. [2] The Foundation for Centripetal Art was formed in 2008 [3], and in 2009, a book was published a book dealing with Centripetal Art, and the book incorporated many of the Artist’s own writings (see References). In 2010, the Foundation began co-sponsoring symposia on topics central to the philosophy of art [4].

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[1] See the artist’s websites at [junkochodos.com](http://junkochodos.com), and [centripetalart.com](http://centripetalart.com)

[2] The Artist has lectured at panels and events sponsored by the Getty Museum (Apr. 29, 2014 and Dec. 8, 2001), UCLA (2011), the Fresno Art Museum (2006 and 2005), the Museum of Contemporary Religious Art, St. Louis (Interview on KWMU-FM, 2005), Claremont Graduate University (2004 and 2002), the Long Beach Art Museum (1996 and 2001), and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA (2004, 2003). Most of these lectures were given together with exhibits of her art - either original works, or in some cases, screen images.

[3] See the website for the Foundation for Centripetal Art at [centripetalart.org](http://centripetalart.org).

[4] The Foundation co-sponsored symposia on Art and Authority at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley in 2010 and at UCLA’s Center for the Study of Religion in 2011. Programs leaflets from these symposia are attached; and more information can be found on the Foundation’s website.

The artist was born in Tokyo in 1939, and was just 4 years old when her family lived through the allied bombings of Japan during World War II. She remembers many nights when the lights had to be turned off and dark curtains had to be drawn over all the windows even though they were already covered with black paper glued over them, in case the glass shattered during the bombings. During those times, her mother would often wind up the family's phonograph and play a set of 45-RMP records with Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. At those times, she told her daughters, "Before you die, I want you to hear the most beautiful thing that man has created." Junko remembers hearing the strains of *An die Freude* against the background of bombs exploding nearby. This experience instilled her with a special attitude towards music, and towards art in general. Art was not meant to be a means of entertainment, nor was it meant to be "pretty" or even "beautiful": it was a way of preserving human dignity, and of rising above darkness and destruction and moving towards eternal light. Often she and her sisters had to hide in dark, hand-dug bomb shelters; and it was there that she started to paint on scraps of cardboard using discarded pencils and crayons.

Those ideas and childhood experiences germinated in her mind since that young age; and the concept of "centripetal art" is the result of her life-long activity of creating art.

## 1. THE PHILOSOPHY OF CENTRIPETAL ART

Notions of eternity and transcendence, and of a "center" or "soul" are themselves rare in today's art world and interest in the philosophy of art and serious art criticism in general seems to have died out after the 1960s. [5] But Centripetal Art engages this subject, and offers a coherent set of answers to some of the most fundamental questions of the philosophy of art. None of these questions has fixed or "correct" answers: different people may offer different answers. But the term "centripetal art" refers to one coherent set of answers:

### **A. What is the artist doing in the Process of Creating Art? - Art is a spiritual journey taken in an altered state of consciousness.**

When she coined the term, the artist wrote, "The term refers to art created by an artist who strives towards her center and encounters a Presence there. The center is a place where barriers are transcended: barriers of ethnicity, gender, religious categories and denominations, and of confined ideas of blood and soil; and where the barriers between

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[5] Danto, Arthur C., *The Death of Art* (New York: Haven Publications, 1984); *After the End of Art*, The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1995, Bollingen series 35:44, Princeton Univ. Press 1997.

the atheist and the believer, and between us and them, are transcended. For the artist who strives towards the center, the process of creating art itself becomes an existential and spiritual journey on which every step must be taken with honesty, with discipline, and with courage.”

Centripetal art is created in an altered state of consciousness –a state achieved without any mind-altering drugs or substances. The artist must leave the everyday state of consciousness because the act of creation is not only an act of deliberate craft: it involves a surrender to the subject of the art, and an openness to the possibilities it presents, which could not flourish in the normal state of consciousness.

The centripetal artist does not set out to record an image on the surface of the work, because the act of painting involves a progressively intimate relationship with the image. Each line the artist draws leads to the next line; and until the next line is drawn the artist does not know what it will be. If the image is clear to the artist before the work is begun –if the artist has a preconceived idea which he is trying to realize - then the work tends to be craft, or an illustration of the artist’s philosophy, rather than centripetal art. The centripetal artist sets out on a journey of exploration and discovery, and does not call the work complete until the journey is over.

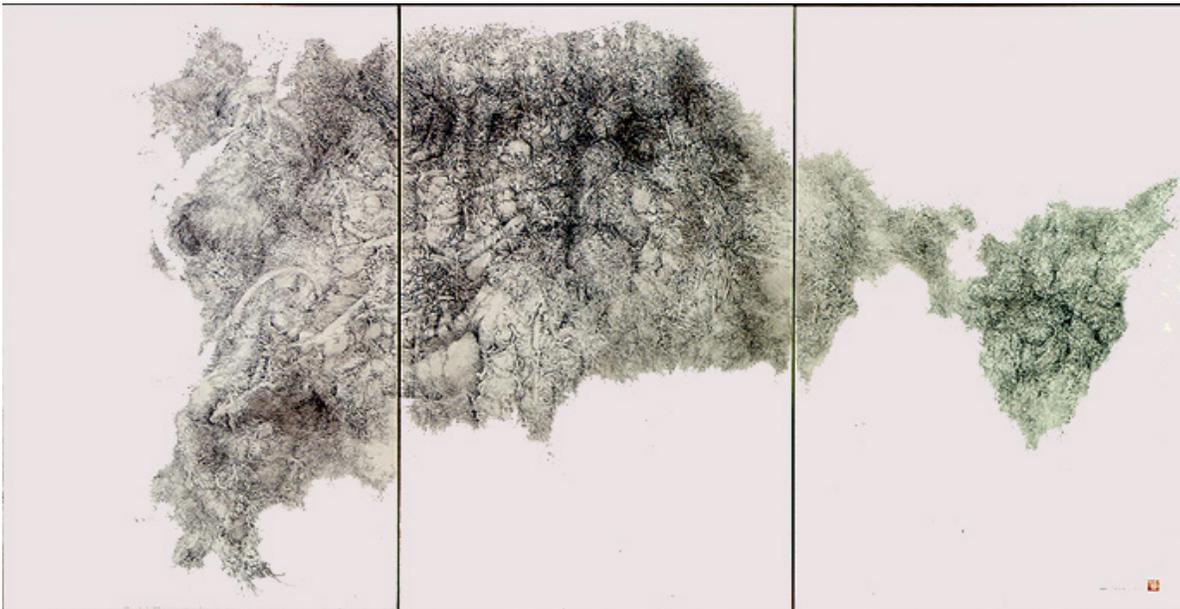
The centripetal artist strives to engage the Self which is something much larger than the ego: it is a gate-way to the whole universe. The artist has no affiliation with any religious or spiritual institution: her beliefs and practices are based on her own experience. [See Also William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, regarding personal religion] When the Self is open, the energy of the whole universe flows into it, and can flow out of it again enhanced. One of the basic tenets of centripetal art is that the thing which is most personal is also, therefore, the most universal. The struggle to be authentically personal is a major element of the process of creation. When it is successful, the Self and the universe become one and the art work is a window into eternity.

## **B. What is the relationship of the Artist to the Subject Matter of the work? - Encounter.**

The Presence of which the artist wrote manifests itself in the subjects she paints. It is not confined to glorious subjects, or beautiful ones: to the artist who is open to such things, a Presence may dwell in even objects which no one else would consider

looking at. This artist's work (see below) includes images of dead roots and burls, dead flowers, slaughtered birds, broken engine parts - subjects which are not usually thought of as inspiring. The artist does more than see these objects, and more than simply represent them: she *encounters* them, which is to say, that she has a life-changing interaction with them. And in that interaction, she is changed - and the objects too, are changed. For even though they may seem lifeless, they receive new life in the context of the art.

The artist wrote about one of her earliest series, *Dead Flowers* (1973): "Flowers standing in a vase were gradually dying and I found them beautiful. I stared at them for one year and drew them in all their stages of death. Soon I saw a radiant light shining out from them, and the light began to take the shape of a thousand Buddhas welling up from among the dry leaves and flowers. The flowers were reborn in front of my eyes."



*Dead Flower Series, No. 8, Byoobu, (1973)* Pen-and-ink with wash, Overall 40" high x 66 wide  
Permanent Collection of the Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, California

### **C. What is the relationship of the artist, and of the art, to the viewer? And when is the work of art successful? -- Participation.**

The centripetal artist believes that the viewer must participate in the art work: not merely view it and appreciate it. The viewer's relationship to the work should not be merely passive: The artist stands behind the work, and the viewer stands in front of it; and they encounter each other in the plane of the work. The artist believes that when her journey is successful, the viewer participates in it and starts out on his or her own journey. Then the process of creating art and the process of viewing art become one; and the transcendence that the artist reaches becomes the viewer's own transcendence.

The artist however is not a therapist: her responsibility is to the work, not to any specific viewer. Nor does the participation centripetal art tries to encourage involve the viewer modifying the art work. Instead, it is an inner participation which prompts a conversation - sometimes verbal, sometimes nonverbal - between the artist, the art work, and the viewer.

#### **D. THE ROLE AND MISSION OF THE ARTIST -- Explorer and Constructive Outsider.**

Centripetal art sees the artist as a kind of explorer: a person who goes to a place where the rest of us have not gone, and cannot go. The “place” could be something outside our world, or something deep inside our world. In this way, the artist is like a shaman: someone with special access to an inner truth. We admire the artist’s courage in making the journey and we value the products the artist brings back from the places he has gone - for their novelty, and rarity, and as evidence of the courage required to go there.

And centripetal art sees the role and mission of the artist to be a constructive outsider: a person who stands outside the community, but whose intention is to give something to that community. The Old Testament prophets are one example of “constructive outsiders” and centripetal artists have much in common with them. They are outsiders because they encounter the subject-matter of their work as a primary act - not in ways they were taught. And they are constructive because they bring back their images to the community, in the belief that these images can awaken the viewer to reality and shake his complacency at the deepest level. The centripetal artist does not intend to change the society’s political structures but instead, tries to reach each viewer’s inner depth to awaken him. An essential element of the philosophy of centripetal art is that art has a contribution to make to society because as each individual viewer is awakened, society itself becomes awakened.

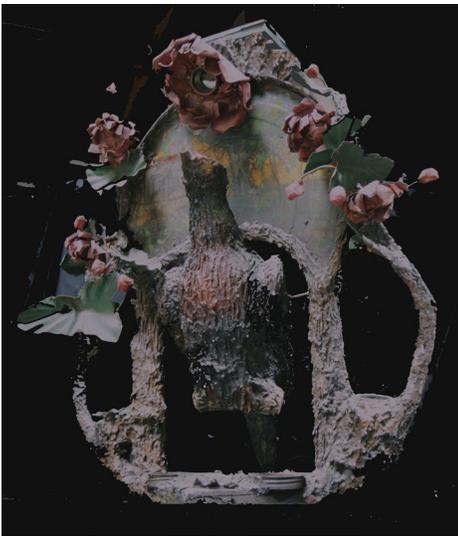
## **2. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES**

Since she began painting professionally in the early 1970s, Junko Chodos has produced over 1000 works. We select only a few to show here, to illustrate some of the principles of the philosophy of Centripetal Art.

## A. Transcendence: *Requiem for an Executed Bird*

During the war, the artist was taken away from Tokyo to live in the country with her uncle. One day, when she was four years old, she walked into one of the rooms in the house and found a hen, slaughtered, with its head chopped off, hanging upside down with its blood dripping into a bowl that had been carefully placed on the straw mat below. To the little girl, this slaughtered bird represented all the horrors of war, death, cruelty and fascism. She saw the bird had been slaughtered not because of anything it had done, but simply because it wanted to fly. She was traumatized, and from that day forward, she had an intense phobia of birds and could not even look at them.

But one day, 50 years later, while browsing in a junk store near her home, she stumbled across an old, ugly handmade decanter in the shape of a bird with its head chopped off. The store owner told her, "I can sell it to you at a discount because its head is missing." She purchased the decanter and brought it to her studio. Then using the decanter as a model, she began to paint the bird: she fell into a trance-like state and worked 12 hours every day in her studio painting different images of the slaughtered bird. She did not know what was compelling her to paint, but she kept working for two months, uninterrupted, and produced 45 works. -- The early works of this series were bloody and showed the bird's torn feathers and broken wings, and blood. But by the time she reached the 22d work, she realized that the blood had turned into rose petals, and that the Bird was in a cathedral and that she was painting a Requiem for him. She continued her work as the bloody reds turned into gold, and the Bird now hovered in golden circles of heavenly air.



Hand-made decanter, 16"x10". Creator and date of creation unknown

It was only after she had completed the 45th work that she was able to leave the studio and return to her normal life, and normal state of consciousness. The Bird had been healed, and she also had been healed. The phobia was gone, and the traumatic experience had been transcended.



No. 4

Images from the series  
REQUIEM FOR AN EXECUTED  
BIRD (1991)

45 works, all Mixed Media on  
Paper  
40"x32"



No. 22  
*The Bird in the Cathedral*



No. 44

## B. Altered State of Consciousness: *Emerging Consciousness*

While all of her works were created in an altered state of consciousness, in the late 1980s Junko set out to push the envelope of the altered state: she created a series of 12 works with her eyes closed; each work took just 15 minutes. These works are *automatic writings*: in creating them, the artist used her own hands and fingers directly on the paper, to feel the energy of each line she had laid down on the paper, and to guide her search for the next line.



No. 8

*Emerging Consciousness* (1988) Acrylic on Kromekote Paper, 25”x 20”



No. 11

## C. Constructive Outsider: *Lift the Curtain*

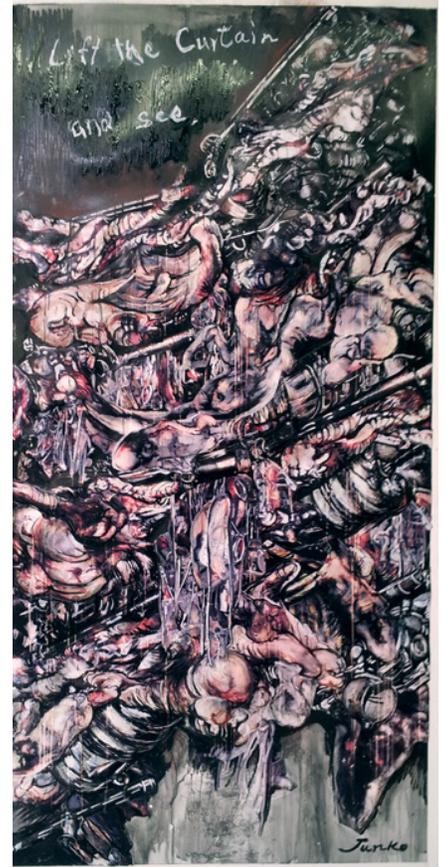
The series of 9 works completed in 2012/2013 consists of collages of computer prints on mylar. The computer prints are photos of burls and broken engine, and parts of images of the artist’s earlier drawings, manipulated by computer and layered onto the mylar. The mylar panels are all 42”wide and 84”high. Works 1-7 and 9 have captions, and work No. 8, which is two panels wide, has no caption. But the Artist wrote of this 8th work that it shows the liquidity and endless mobility of the universe –and is a kind of Self-portrait



No.1, "Burnt and swollen, What are you doing in a place like this?"



No.3, "Though broken and bleeding, you too still have aspiration."



No. 5, "Lift the Curtain and See"



No. 8

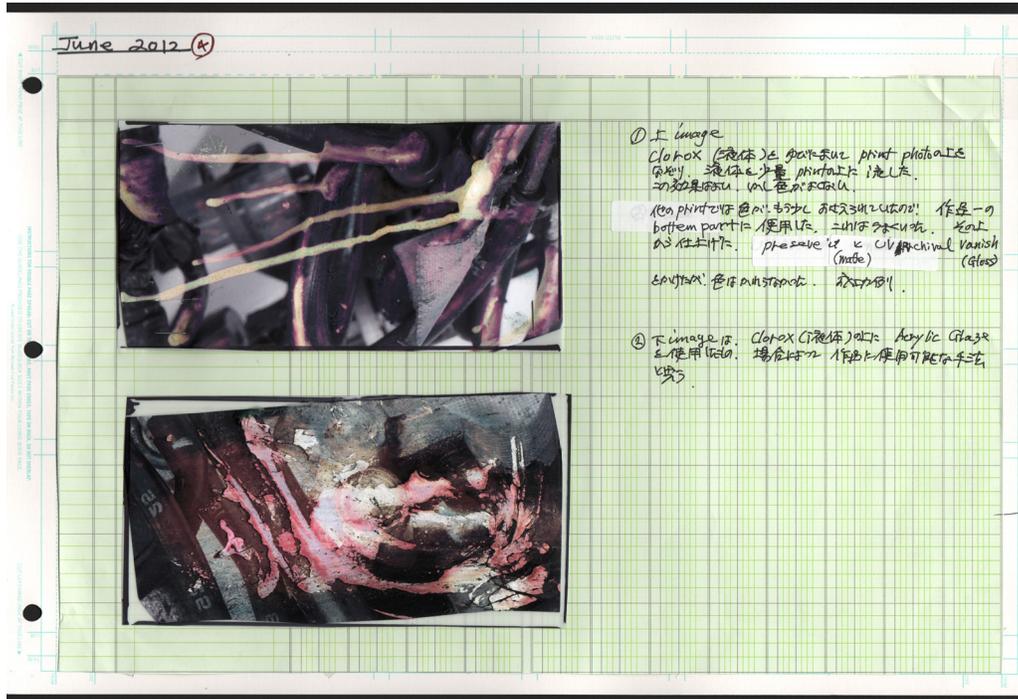
LIFT THE CURTAIN  
series (2012/2013)

Collage of computer  
prints on mylar

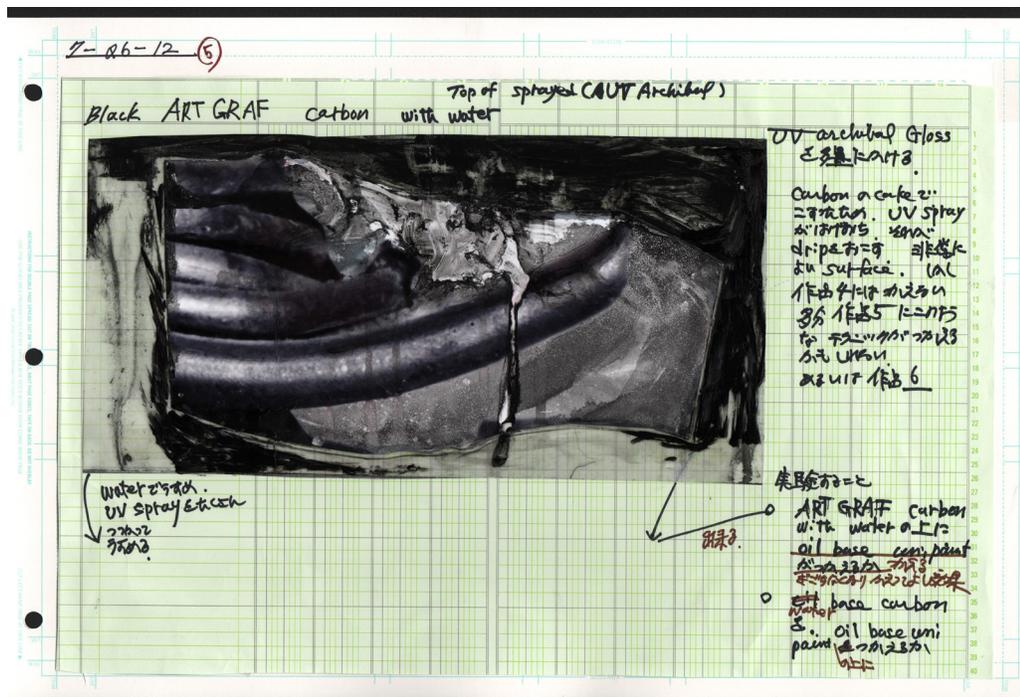
All works except No. 8,  
42" wide x 84" high

No. 8, two panels,  
84"x84"

The colors in these works (see Nos. 5 and 8 above) are not created with paint, craypas or acrylic: they are generated by applying special chemicals to the prints, which cause the ink to change color. The artist has kept meticulous studio diaries and sketchbooks throughout her working career, documenting the many technical experiments she has carried out with scientific accuracy.



She says that in creating her work, she plays three different roles: artist, scientist, and guinea pig.



### 3. THE PLACE OF CENTRIPETAL ART IN HISTORY

The philosophical views which are central to Centripetal Art grow out of the artist's experience of creating art: they were not learned from outside sources. She was profoundly influenced by many kinds of art, including some classical Japanese art and the art of the German artist, Paul Klee. But she does not consider herself to be a member of any "school".

Still the Artist was gratified to encounter the work of some 20th Century western thinkers whose writings supported key elements of her philosophy of aesthetics. Herbert Read, in *Icon and Idea*, [6] advanced the notion that art is the primary act of forming consciousness and precedes science, religion and philosophy. For before we can theorize about the world, we must see it, and to see it is to form our consciousness. So art is not an act of "imitation" (*mimesis*, as Plato described it) nor a way of describing reality, but rather the primary way of encountering the world and interacting with it to form consciousness. Ernst Cassirer, in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* [7] advanced a similar idea: that art - like religion, myth, cognition - every function of the human spirit embodies an original formative power which does not merely reflect the empirically given but rather produces it accordance with its own independent principle. These thinkers reinforced the Artist's philosophical ideas: without these ideas, the notion that art might change the world would have no rational basis.

Her notion of the importance of the "center" corresponds to the ideas of Hans Sedlmayr (*Art in Crisis: the Loss of the Center*, 1957)[8], who warned that the loss of the center would lead to a crisis, and that art would have to accept new challenges in order to fill the center and usher in a new age. Sedlmayr's book reinforced the Artist's idea that she has a responsibility towards society and towards the course of history. And R.G. Collingwood, one of the early theorists of "modern art", wrote, in 1938, *The Principles of Art*, [9] that the artist was not a mere craftsman, that "art proper" would not include art created with a preconceived idea but instead, would include only art created by an artist who went on a journey of exploration and discovery as he created. For Collingwood, much of the art in our museums would not qualify as "art proper": religious iconography, portraiture, and other types of art - types which Plato might have approved as good examples of *mimesis* - should instead be seen as craft.

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[6] Read, Herbert, *Icon and Idea* (New York, Schocken Books 1965)

[7] Cassirer, Ernst, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press 1953)

[8] Sedlmayr, Hans, *Art in Crisis: The Loss of the Center* (New Jersey, Transaction Publishers 2006)

[9] Collingwood, R.G. *The Principles of Art* (Oxford Univ. Press 1982 Edn.)

In addition to these western thinkers, some importance must be ascribed to the influence of the Eastern philosophy of art. The treatise known in Japan as *Kogahinroku*, written in China in 500 AD, during the Qi Dynasty, set out the six basic criteria of great art. The first and most important of these was *Ch'i*: breath, spirit, or vital force. The art work was viewed as the trace on of the artist's breath and its value was assessed based on the life-force it reflects. This view is central to the notion of centripetal art: every work of the artist is the trace of her breath and spirit. If you quiet your mind, it is possible to feel the energy of the work with your hand –but only if you are in the presence of the work (not looking at digital image) and only if the work is actually powerful.

## REFERENCES

**In addition to the sources cited in the footnotes, see the following books which have had a strong influence on the Philosophy of Centripetal Art:**

1. James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York, Simon and Schuster 1997), for a discussion of personal religion as opposed to institutional religion.
2. Wilber, Ken, *The Eye of Spirit*, 3d Edn. (Boston, Shambhala 2001), for a discussion of the idea that altered states, which used to be seen as pathological, will in the future be seen as healthy and valuable.
3. Klee, Paul, *The Thinking Eye* (New York, Wittenborn, 1961), for a document written by an artist whose art Junko Chodos has admired since her teens.
- 4 . Campbell, Joseph, *The Power of Myth* (New York, Doubleday 1988)
5. Buber, Martin, *I and Thou* (New York, Scribner 1970)
6. Neumann, Erich, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Princeton Univ. Press 1954

**And see the following books by and about the Artist:**

1. Noriko Gamblin, ed., *Metamorphoses: The Transformative Vision of JUNKO CHODOS* (2001, Long Beach Museum and Giotto Multimedia). Catalog of One-Person show

2. Rafael Chodos, Why on Earth Does God Have to Paint? / Centripetal Art (2009, Giotto Multimedia), based on selected works and writings of Junko Chodos.

**EXTERNAL LINKS:**

1. [Junkochodos.com](http://Junkochodos.com) - the artist's main website. See also, [centripetalart.com](http://centripetalart.com).
2. [Junkochodos.net](http://Junkochodos.net) - the artist's earlier website, with many images and papers
3. [giottoslibrary.com](http://giottoslibrary.com), a library of eBooks. The ART chamber contains many catalogs of the works of Junko Chodos.
4. [centripetalart.org](http://centripetalart.org), website of the Foundation for Centripetal Art.

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# ART AND AUTHORITY

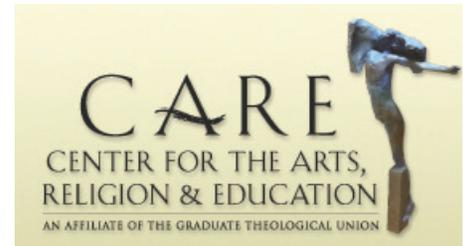
A Lecture/Discussion Program

Thursday evening, February 18, 2010,

6:00 TO 9:00 PM

at the Doug Adams Gallery at the Badè Museum  
located at the Pacific School of Religion.

1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley, California  
main level of the Holbrook Building.



## Introduction

Carin Jacobs•Director of CARE

## Moderator

Dr. Peter Selz•Professor Emeritus•European and American Modern Art•UC Berkeley

20-Minute Papers, each followed by a question-and-answer period:

### Authority and the Church

Prof. Michael Morris, OP•Professor of Religion and the Arts•  
Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

### Authority and the Museum

Rene de Guzman•Senior Curator of Art•Oakland Museum of Art

### Authority and the Art Market

Catharine Clark•Owner/Director of the Catharine Clark Gallery•San Francisco

### Authority and Authenticity

Rafael Chodos•President•Foundation for Centripetal Art

*Refreshments will be served. Admission Free.*

The relationship between art and authority is complicated and unsettled. Even today, art continues to serve its perennial function as a socio-economic marker: one displays his status as cultured and affluent by owning art and to a lesser extent, appreciating it. And art continues to align itself with political and religious authority as public art and liturgical/religious art continue to be created and displayed. But in the early decades of the 20th century, artists stopped feeling compelled to pander to the narcissism of the aristocracy and of the Church, and began to paint new subjects—and painted familiar subjects in ways which were not encouraged by the established authorities. Art's role as a form of self-expression became paramount, and by the later decades of the 20th century, the whole notion of "authority" started to come into question. But is this trend ending? This program seeks to stimulate discussion about art's relationship to authority in the church, in the museum, and in the art market.

**Carin Jacobs, Director of the Center for the Arts, Religion and Education and the Doug Adams Gallery at GTU,** is a museum educator and scholar of museum studies. She earned a B.A. in French Literature from UC Santa Cruz and earned her M.A. in Museum Studies from John F. Kennedy University with a focus on education and public programming. Carin has worked for a number of Bay Area museums, including SFMOMA, the Oakland Museum of California, and the Magnes, managing interdisciplinary cultural programs for adult and college audiences. Her main areas of interest are object-based learning, museum literacy, and the integration of museums in college teaching. She has lectured on and authored a number of articles and book reviews on these topics, including, most recently, "Beyond the Field Trip: Museum Literacy and Higher Education," published in *Museum Management and Curatorship*.

**Peter Selz, Professor Emeritus of Art History at UC Berkeley,** has served as professor in Moholy-Nagy's New Bauhaus School, curator of Jean Tinguely's momentous "Homage to New York" (1960) at NY MOMA, founding director of the Berkeley Art Museum, and curator of the pioneering exhibition, "Directions of Kinetic Sculpture" (1966). After receiving his PhD from the University of Chicago and teaching at the Institute of Design, Peter Selz was appointed Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at MoMA, where he sponsored Tinguely's controversial self-destroying artwork. Later, he became Founding Director of the Berkeley Art Museum. Prof. Selz has authored many reviews and articles including 15 books on 20th Century Art, from *German Expressionist Painting* (1957) to *The Art of Engagement* (2005).

**Michael Morris, OP, Professor of Religion and the Arts, Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology** B.F.A., University of Southern California; B.A., M.Div., St. Albert's College; M.A., Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley. Fr. Michael trains his students to develop an understanding of religious art as the key to a deeper understanding of theology. For him, it is an important and pleasurable quest to experience in religious studies the beauty that radiates from truth. Fr. Michael is also the director of the Santa Fe Institute, a private research center with a library of 12,000 volumes devoted to Religion and the Arts. For over ten years he has been a regular art essayist for the monthly devotional booklet "*Magnificat*." and he is currently working on a number of writing and research projects including *Summa Cinematica*, discovering the religious themes found in film in a systematic and categorical way inspired by Thomas Aquinas.

**René de Guzman, Senior Curator of Art at the Oakland Museum of California** was formerly director of visual arts at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. As one of its first staff members he helped establish its artistic vision and built an audience for the start-up arts organization. As Director, René supported emerging and mid-career artists, nurtured diverse cultural forms, connected the fine arts to civic life, and broadened audiences with engaging programs. After earning a BFA in art practice at the University of California, Berkeley in 1987, he worked as an individual artist and his mixed media sculptures are in private and public collections, including the Berkeley Art Museum and the San Jose Museum of Art. He received an Art Matters Individual Artist Award (1992) and has taught in the graduate fine arts program of the San Francisco Arts Institute and the California College of the Arts.

**Catharine Clark, Director/Owner of the Catharine Clark Gallery in San Francisco,** Ms. Clark's impressive accomplishments can be viewed at the Gallery's website, [cclarkgallery.com](http://cclarkgallery.com).

**Rafael Chodos, along with his wife, the artist JUNKO CHODOS, formed THE FOUNDATION FOR CENTRIPETAL ART in 2008.** The Foundation's mission is to spread the idea of centripetal art, and to stimulate discussion of the meaning and role of contemporary art in our lives. "Centripetal art" is art that seeks the center in order to encounter divine presence there. This term, coined in 1998, was born out of Junko's lifelong experience as an artist. Earlier this year, Rafael published *Why on Earth Does God Have to Paint?/ Centripetal Art*, based on selected works and writings of Junko Chodos. He is the author of *The Jewish Attitude Towards Justice and Law* (1984), *The Law of Fiduciary Duties* (2000), *Centripetal Art/Matrix of Growth* (2008 – eBook), and of many articles dealing with the intersections of art, religion, and law. See [CentripetalArt.com](http://CentripetalArt.com) and [Chodos.com](http://Chodos.com).

# ART AND RELIGION

A Lecture/Discussion Program

Wednesday evening, February 23, 2011,

7:00 TO 9:00 PM

HILLEL at UCLA: 574 Hilgard Avenue

with Art Exhibit of works by Junko Chodos:

Concerning Art and Religion the complete series,

and selections from *Requiem for an Executed Bird*

HOSTED BY

The Dortort Center for

**CREATIVITY**  
IN THE **ARTS**  
at UCLA Hillel

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AND



## Introduction

Ra'anana Boustan • Director of UCLA Center For the Study of Religion

## Moderator

Rafael Chodos • President, Foundation for Centripetal Art • Author • Lawyer

*20-Minute Papers, each followed by a question-and-answer period:*

### **The Second Commandment and Idolatry**

Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller • Director, UCLA Hillel

### **Literary Art as Religious Revelation**

Jack Miles • Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author of *God: A Biography*

### **Image and Revelation in the 21st Century**

Junko Chodos • Artist

*Refreshments will be served. Admission Free.*

*Parking is available for \$10 at UCLA lot #2 on the corner of Westholme and Hilgard.*

*No parking on Strathmore Drive or 600 block of Westholme.*

*RSVP by phone 310/208-3081x108, or online at [www.uclahillel.org/artreligion](http://www.uclahillel.org/artreligion)*

The search for “ultimate truth and meaning” is often considered to be the essential business of religion. But might not art also provide an avenue for this same pursuit? Indeed, inspiration and revelation, however conceived, are often said to play an equally essential role for the artist as for the religious visionary. Is art then an alternative to religion? Can art serve as a basis for creating a sense of community and shared purpose without relying on religion? Or are art and religion in fact complementary and even overlapping forces in shaping human life?

Living as we do in a post-Enlightenment age, when the authority of traditional religious texts and practices has been undermined in many quarters by radical doubt but the search for sources of enlightening inspiration remains undiminished, we take this opportunity to explore the complex relationship between art and religion in our contemporary world.

**Rafael Chodos** practices law and is the President of GiottoMultimedia. He is the author of many essays and articles on law, technology, and religion, and of *The Law of Fiduciary Duties* (2000), *The Jewish Attitude Towards Justice and Law* (1984), *Centripetal Art: Matrix of Growth* (eBook 2008), and *Why on Earth Does God Have to Paint? / Centripetal Art* (2009) co-authored with his wife, the artist, Junko Chodos. In 2008, Rafael and Junko formed The Foundation for Centripetal Art.

**Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller** is in his 34th year at UCLA Hillel as director. He was ordained in 1971 at Yeshiva University where he also earned a Masters Degree in Rabbinic Literature. He has taught Kabbalah and Talmud at the University of Judaism, is a Fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, and is a member of the Academic Advisory Board of the Wilstein Institute for Social Policy. He is also a member of the faculty of the Wexner Heritage Foundation and is a Lehman Faculty Fellow at the Brandeis-Bardin Institute.

**Jack Miles** is Distinguished Professor of English and Religious Studies with the University of California at Irvine and Senior Fellow for Religious Affairs with the Pacific Council on International Policy. He is a writer whose work has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and many other publications. His book *GOD: A Biography* won a Pulitzer Prize in 1996. His book *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God* led to his being named a MacArthur Fellow for the years 2003-2007. He is currently at work as general editor of the forthcoming *Norton Anthology of World Religions*.

**Junko Chodos** was born and raised in Japan during WWII. She began creating art in hand-dug trenches where she and her family hid from the Allied bombings. This severe experience, as well as her early religious experiences, led her to form the concept of Centripetal Art and she has lectured often on that concept. She has exhibited in one-person shows in galleries and museums in the United States, Japan and Europe. The first work in her current series, *Mass Killing*—visual lamentations on genocide throughout the world and through history—recently became part of the permanent collection of the Central European University in Budapest. She is a Fellow of the Society for Art, Religion and Contemporary Culture.

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*Part of the Foundation's mission is to promote serious discussion  
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