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HIKING WHILE BLACK • SKIN COLOR AND THE ECOLOGY OF JUSTICE

Time as Ally

Notes on living in kinship with nature

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Consider for a moment
being an integral part
of a living, conscious, animate, interactive universe
in which time is experienced through the cells of the body
and understood as multiple layers of rhythms and movement.

Time perceived as an infinity of patterns,
that appear and disappear
into a constantly transforming flux.

In this view time is seen as essence,
and as essence, innately creative.
Humans, as part of the flux,
have duties and responsibilities
for sustaining, renewing, and restoring
the balance and harmony of the whole.

Exploring such an understanding
fundamentally reshapes how we live,
and our role in the creative process.

Insight clarifies when living with time as an ally.
The capacity to discern patterns, harmonies, and rhythms
grows stronger, unfolding deeper understandings
of the consequences of beliefs and ideas.



In the Seas, 20 x 24 inches, oil on canvas, 2019.





In the Indigenous worldview,
the focus of consciousness is
wahkohtowin—
“knowing how you are related to all creation.”*
Relationship to place is the heart of learning
and where we discover the pleasures, obligations, kindnesses,
and duties of self in kinship.

* *Wahkohtowin* is a Cree word. Cree are an Algonquian-speaking First Nations
tribe living primarily in Canada and the Northwest Territories.

Another way to speak of the natural order
is as a temporal order,
with cycles and patterns that move in and out of form:
Thought, form, life, decay, transformation, repeat.
Time is movement and movement
is constant and chaotic.



Embrace, 10 x 20 inches, oil on canvas, 2019.

In a linear perception of time,
time becomes a commodity,
seen and held in mechanized form.
To separate time from its spirit,
to understand it only within a singular framework,
generates societal dissonance and distortions of serious consequence.

If we adhere to the notion
that the universe and its forms are made of energy,
then feelings can be spoken of
as existing in wavelengths of energies
that are perceived by our senses.
Feelings (not to be confused with emotions),
exist before image, which exists before words.

When the senses are open,
they can freely come to agreement
about what is being perceived, or consensus.
In an experience of harmony
with the natural or temporal order,
can come an experience of certainty;
you can say that you "know."
That experience, embedded in our cells,
is the memory of the field of harmony that births all life.
To live with time as an ally is to be in harmony with life.

In the Native world
a lived connection with the whole
and a sense of harmony bring a person into kinship
with all aspects of the natural world.

In Native narratives,
whether they are mundane conversation,
family stories, jokes, ceremonial song, creation stories, literature,
the references to time place everything in a circle of wholeness.

The time when thunder sleeps, the time of the falling leaves,
the time when the bears wake,
reflect a reality that respects the mystery of transformation
and the gift of renewal that is embedded in time.

Discerning the myriad movements of time
and its overlapping layers of diverse rhythms
is one of the great pleasures of being alive.
It is sensual, engaging, transformative.

Many rhythms exist within the human body.
The heartbeat, the breath,
the cycle of digestion, of blinking, of walking,
the movement of thought, the sleep cycle,
the processes of the liver, kidneys,
all diverse, overlapping, distinct movements,
patterns, cycles, and rhythms
within a body designed to harmonize them.

Humans possess an inherent capacity
to live with multiplicities of time,
but are taught to live
by only one understanding of time.
It is useful to agree on a type of time for certain purposes,
just as nouns are useful for naming.
However, imagining that an intellectual agreement
describes what time is in its entirety,
especially when that description does not match
what we observe and experience through our senses,
is comparable to wearing your shoes on the wrong feet.
It is strange, disorienting, a distortion.



There is a delusional effect that comes of living with a formulation of time imposed over the innate time of the natural world, causing societies to function in a reality disconnected from the principles that govern the creation of life.

Consider a life lived with a cellular understanding of time as the essence that creates, one that engenders skillful living and supports a worldview of relationship that holds the needs of all forms of life as equal to the needs of human life. Time then is no longer a commodity, no longer given the task of coercing, controlling, or dominating the design of our lives.

We have the choice to move with time, rather than against it. If, rather than the concepts of duality, binary thinking, and opposing forces, human awareness shifted its attention to explore the processes of complementarity and attraction, how would such a shift affect the pragmatics of the way we live, what we value, what we create? ○



Sated, 12 x 16 inches, oil on canvas, 2019.



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