

The Problem of Inner and Outer



The problem of inner and outer is one that can be taken in many ways, yet however one takes this problem it seems to be one that is necessarily posed by life. No matter our preoccupation, spiritual or philosophical commitments, life presents itself in two *apparent* orders; one that varies with the individual and their action, and one that *appears* to go on independently of this. This double articulation of reality permeates life and all its various aspects, be it personal, social, political, philosophical or spiritual. This is true in my own life; it is a problem that stays with me, accompanying my thought and experience. I call it a problem, but not in the normal sense of the word. It is not a puzzle that contains a prefigured solution to be uncovered, but rather it can be seen as a field of potential, a question that does not contain its answer, a space in which new possibilities can emerge. In this sense, it has been there like a friend rather than an issue; a friend that challenges me to engage with life and to partake in its creativity.

Art, in the broadest sense of the term, occupies a particularly interesting and privileged position in relation to this problem, for it can be seen as an attempt to open one to other worlds, to breach one's own world, and to make true contact with an *other*. It has become apparent that this is what it means for me to make images. In a moment of clarity, I put it like this:

“As I continue to pursue this strange path it becomes clear that there is, for me, but one pressing question; what, if at all, of the artist's internal state makes its way into their work? This is a question which is doomed to never find an answer, for the singularity of any affective state does not only go beyond language but is even obfuscated to the being who turns around to try and catch a glimpse of what it is they feel. It's as if the vibrancy of these living states dissolve the second they are exposed to meta-consciousness like a roll of film in the sun. Thus it is not a question I ask to find an answer, rather it is one I ask by doing and by experiencing. I have faith that our individual boundaries are porous enough that we can reach outside of ourselves and make, even if only the slightest amount, real contact.”

‘The Problem of Inner and Outer’ is a dual aspect series of 5 drawings and 5 paintings that coordinate with two distinct directions of experience; one towards the sense-perceptible and the other towards thought. Put in spatial terms; one aspect pointed outward and the other inward. What was discovered is that these directions are not so distinct and that what we expect to find in one, we find in the other.

The zones that emerge as a by-product of determined structures, whether they be a threshold of plants to the side of a road, the space along a water runoff that cuts through a city, or a ravine that lays in the shadows of a high-rise apartment building, have had a peculiar effect on me since I was a child. They

have the capacity to grasp my immediate attention, to pervade me with their *feeling*, to make me unaware of anything outside of that milieu, or the distinctions within it, in short, to make me porous to an outside. This is an outside that feels truly other, something that doesn't conform to my world, but rather dissolves it and subsumes me into it. What is found here, is what we are conditioned to attribute to subjective interiors, that is; feeling, quality and meaning. Suddenly the world is turned inside out. It is through my paintings of these zones, the plants and objects that occupy them, that I further absorb these alterities, and question if they can make themselves felt in the image.

The drawings in 'The Problem of Inner and Outer' tend toward those worlds we do not experience with our senses. Each drawing starts with a simple scaffolding of ruled lines or shapes on which the drawings begin to develop their own desire and logic. My role is like that of a gardener; tending to the conditions of the drawing and allowing it to grow. In this process ideas spontaneously emerge that exceed my own understanding, revealing later their foreign logic of symbols, ratio and space. By going 'inwards' toward thought, I am confronted with a world beyond myself. Again we arrive at an inversion of our associated expectations.

In the case of the sense-oriented paintings it is as if an inside was reached by going out, and in the thought-oriented drawings an outside by going in. This inversion has given a new sense to the problem of inner and outer. A sense that sees one in the other. A glimpse of light seeping through the cavernous walls of individual experience. An invitation to the possibility of unmoderated contact with an *other*, with the world in itself.

Matthew Cangiano is a Toronto-based artist whose interest lies in the idea of images. He sees art as a way to experience, explore, and discover their unique capacities. 'The Problem of Inner and Outer' is his first solo exhibition in Vancouver.

