

Bill Ramage's new installation "The Self" opens at the Compass Center

Bill Ramage's 'The Self' is his latest stop in a long artistic voyage. The exhibit of installation drawings and sculpture will be presented at the Compass Music and Arts Center from July 7 through August 19. Come to the opening reception on Friday, July 7 from 5:00-7:30 to hear Ramage speak about the ideas that have propelled his 35-year journey.

When some people observe an abstract work of art like a Mark Rothko color field or the splattered paintings of Jackson Pollock, they think "I could do that". A not-so-inventive comeback could be, "But you didn't". But that's really not the point. The point is that the artist had a concept in mind, a reason for making that work of art. For some it may be an experiment, for others it might be self-discovery, but it's always an artistic journey the artist is on for one reason or another. Bill Ramage has been on such a journey for 35 years. "Any one piece", he says "is not the art that it might appear to be; in fact, it is really nothing without the context of its purpose."

Ramage started out as a pretty straight forward representational artist, but while working on a series of large-scale 'head' drawings – *The Empirical Studies*, where the drawings of the heads are 7 to 10 feet tall – he had an overpowering desire to explore how we see the world and to try and find another way to do so.

The next 35 years unfolded in what is now recognized as three series of works: The Empirical Studies; the Centripetal drawings (spatial drawings *in situ*); and the Neuralchemist drawings (metaphorical drawings in search of a mental mechanism that sees).

Since those large-scale drawings back in the late 1970s, the Castleton State College Professor Emeritus of Art of 34 years has wanted viewers to question the very idea of perception – to challenge the way we see the world. You could say he's on a parallel journey to modern artists like Kazimir Malevich and Jackson Pollock, but with a different destination in mind.

To relate these artists' work to what Ramage is creating, consider a quote by Pollock: "Painting is a state of being, self-discovery. Every good artist paints what he is." Now see it from Ramage's point of view: "Seeing is a state of being, self-discovery. Every conscious Being sees what he or she is."

The second series of works, The Centripetal installations, led him to realize that perception is an expression of all that is the life one lives. He refers to this as a mental mechanism he calls the "Neuralchemist". To him, the Neuralchemist "determines what the seeing will be, what it will look like, and what it will mean". The series of ten paired drawing installations Ramage calls 'The Self' is his latest experiment with the "Neuralchemist" as he revisits this phase of his artistic journey.

Ramage asks the viewer to consider that since the 15th century we've essentially all 'seen' the same way; the discovery of linear perspective transformed how we see the world. It has been

embedded in us so deeply that it hasn't even crossed our minds that another way to see may exist. But what about before linear perspective? People of that time couldn't have imagined they could see differently. So maybe it's not a matter of if we'll ever experience another change in perception, but when.

Regional art viewers may have seen Ramage's works at the Flemming Museum, the Hood Museum at Dartmouth, and the Williams College Museum of Art in Massachusetts. Ramage has also exhibited and given lectures both nationally and internationally. He earned a B.F.A from the Philadelphia College of Art (now The University of the Arts) and a M.F.A. from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

This exhibit is a part of Vermont Arts 2017, celebrating public funding for the arts.

The Compass Music and Arts Center is located in Park Village at 333 Jones Drive, Brandon VT, 05733 (Park Village used to be the Brandon Training School, located 1.5 miles north of downtown Brandon off Arnold District Rd.). www.cmacvt.org