

Woods

and related works

Much of the time what we think we know we later realize we didn't know. Santa Claus doesn't exist and we are not nearly as wonderful as we thought we were as adolescents. The adult in the flush of their professional success and their rich personal life realizes, with a medical diagnosis or a divorce, that what they had foreseen as their future reality was misconceived. At the same time, if we care to look we may find that we and the world we live in are marvelously more complex and subtle and beautiful than we had thought. Personally and culturally we are constantly in the process of re-defining our conception of reality. The Sun does not revolve around our Earth and indeed there are billions of suns in what we call our galaxy. And there is not one galaxy, there are billions, billions of suns within billions of galaxies. We are much smaller than we had thought. The history of humanity and each of our personal histories is a constant reassessment of our understanding of the physical world, of ourselves, of our relationships to the world, of others, of everything we know.

Unless we stop trying. We can stop thinking. We can stop looking, stop thinking, and we can say for the remaining decades until we die, "This is it. This is the way it is. I get it. Don't talk to me."

This is a central issue in my artwork.

Martin Heidegger spoke of the ability of art to create a *lichtung*, a "clearing", as in a forest where the trees open up and the light comes through – a place, a moment, when the reality of the world is "unconcealed". A moment of clarity, of understanding.

Nelson Goodman spoke of art as a cognitive endeavor, the arts a way of thinking, a way of helping us structure and clarify our thoughts about the world. The arts are symbol systems we use to create an analogue of the world as we understand it.

Much of Western religious thought says that ultimately you can never fully understand, you eventually have to abandon the effort to understand and you have to rely on "faith". In the scientific version of Western thought, Werner Heisenberg demonstrated, entirely within the logical system of that same Western scientific system, that is impossible – forever impossible – to fully know the world. In the Eastern traditions, we are told that it takes many, many lifetimes to start to approach a full understanding of the world.

What we can do for now is look – very carefully, very patiently, and with great attention. Look for the details, be willing to wait for the details to reveal themselves to us. Wait, watch, look, reassess, look more.... And be open to the possibility that we don't understand nearly as much as we thought we did.

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