

ALYCE SANTORO: ARTIST'S STATEMENT

As an undergraduate science major, physics and biochemistry - subjects intended to help make sense of the extraordinarily intricate and seemingly improbable (photosynthesis, the krebs cycle, quarks, DNA) – fascinated me most. The more I learned, the more I appreciated the elegance of formulas designed to describe the invisible, and at the same time the more intrigued I became by other, unquantifiable ways of knowing such as instinct and intuition. It became clear that my passion was for somewhere in between – I would strive to convey a sense of the miraculousness of science and nature through art. After earning a BS in biology, I enrolled in RISD's Scientific and Technical Illustration graduate program in order to hone my visual communication skills. Feeling compelled to use installation, performance, graffiti, sound, and video in my "scientific illustrations", I soon found myself in the printmaking, sculpture, and textile studios. I began building laboratory equipment to access the intangible. I learned about the "subtle reality technologies" of Peruvian shamans and Tibetan Buddhists, Beuys, Duchamp, Goethe, Steiner, homeopaths, permaculturists, and radionics practitioners. I came to see these hybrid techniques and their methodical, holistic modes of investigation as quintessential blends of art and science. Like Beuys, I have come to suspect that the cultivation of such methods might also serve to restore those who have become perilously detached from nature to a sustainable and harmonious existence within it.

For 20 years I have been testing this hypothesis. I refer to my studio as the Center for the Improbable & (Im)permacultural Research, and consider many of my pieces "*Philosoprops*" or "*Props for Installation & Diatribe*". The *Philosoprops* often take the form of multiples (booklets, posters, cassette tapes, garments, tinctures, etc.) and are intended as catalysts for discussions on a variety of philosophical, scientific, and social themes. These small pieces - often offshoots of larger concepts or projects – are made available fluxshop style on-line and in person via pop-up "museum & curiosity shops" in settings where one may not expect to encounter conceptual art. The opportunity to connect directly with audiences in unexpected settings is an important aspect of my practice. When individuals become engaged in a dialog with one another, small but critical shifts can occur. When the creative forces inherent in nature and one another are recognized and revered, personal, environmental, and social transformation becomes possible.

Captivated by the quality of the local land- and soundscape, I moved from Brooklyn, NY to the mountains near Marfa, Texas in 2006. Since then I have been working toward creating a simple, sustainable environment in which to live and work. Experiments into permaculture techniques, including rainwater harvesting, adaptive reuse, solar and wind power, and food cultivation, have become integrated into my creative practice. Goethe referred to research based on intuition or empathy derived from prolonged observation "delicate empiricism". I am using a delicate empiricist approach to develop insights into what western science refers to as "The Grand Unification Theory" – the notion that at the most basic level everything may be composed of little more than vibration. I am discovering what Buddhists and shamans have known all along – that art and science are two sides of the same coin.