

CJ Hurley

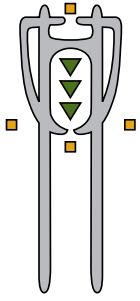
Artist's Statement

"Creating works of art that fire the imagination, stir the deepest emotions, inspire the soul, and offer new things to explore upon each viewing is the most gratifying and satisfying thing I can do with my art. Art and life are part of a greater whole, and I strive to bring high quality art back into people's lives, where they can interact with it intimately and make it an enriching part of their daily life."

My art and design work is rooted in the desire to reclaim art as a way of life, to bring art back into the home where it can be fully enjoyed. The understanding that architecture, and the applied arts are of equal importance to the human environment inspires me as an artist. My desire is to find a way to seamlessly incorporate art into our living environments, where life and art are not separate from one another, but are a holistic one.

My journey as an artist has been subtly unfolding like a flower. For years my paintings centered on social, spiritual, and gender issues. The iconography of Japanese Ukiyo-e prints, western and eastern goddess mythology, religious studies, and eastern philosophy informed and explained my work, and I was compelled to apply philosophical and spiritual insight to an exploration of the chaos inherent in the world. Yet there was one idea that I couldn't reconcile with painting alone – the ideal of art and life united as one. This unification I felt held the key to inner peace and contentment in a world of chronic violence, war and disorder. Drawn to the writings and philosophy of Japanese art critic, Okakura Kakuzo [1862-1913] I began to explore art as not merely paintings on canvas, the creation of objects, but as environment – as an extension of where and how we live. I began to explore my own artistic vision with art as a way of life. I found it in the revolutionary idea that all art [architecture, fine and applied arts] are of equal importance to the human environment. Therefore, I began exploring the integration of architecture, the arts [painting, sculpture, textiles, ceramics, metalwork, and furnishings], and the natural environment as a seamless whole.

The holistic integration of the arts with life offers the opportunity to bring the highest ideals, values, and philosophical ideas that art has to offer into every day activity. While the life and art relationship can readily be seen in the interiors I've created, I apply the same values and ideals to all of my work, whether it is a painting, a piece of pottery, metalwork, or any other medium.



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Visual Poetry

Sir Gawain & the Green Knight

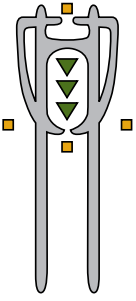
The inspiration for my images comes from the 14th Century poem Sir Gawain & the Green Knight, which is a part of the Arthurian Legend. It is a narrative poem outlining an established type of story known as a “beheading game”, or “trading of blows”.

A fan of the Arthurian cycle already, I was particularly drawn to the poem because it’s author is unknown. It was a bit of a mystery. All that is known is that the writer was a contemporary of Geoffrey Chaucer [The Canterbury Tales]. The Sir Gawain author lived in the Welsh Midlands of what is now England, and wrote in what is know as Middle English. It has been assumed that the writer was “lost to history” for a time because his style became unpopular, replaced by the “modern” style of Chaucer.

My artwork compares and contrasts the Pagan, Christian, historical and literary symbolism of the poem. Although the poem is usually classified as a Christian parable in the Medieval Romance tradition, I was struck by the sense of pathos conveyed by the author at the passing of Pagan traditions and lore.

Although Sir Gawain represents Chivalry, Christian ideals, and, civilization, his counterpoint, the Pagan Green Knight is no polar opposite. The Green Knight represents the Pagan gods, the forces of nature, and the untamed wild. Yet he is no savage, he is neither barbaric nor deceitful. In fact he displays as much honor, and integrity, if not more than Sir Gawain.

Particularly intriguing was the use of the Pentacle in the story. An unprecedented amount of the poem is used to describe the Pentacle [emblazoned on Sir Gawain’s shield] as a Christian symbol. The meanings of symbols shift with the ages. The pentacle, now largely downgraded to a symbol of witchcraft, the devil, and evil began as an early symbol of Christian purity.



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Visual Poetry

Taiga in Green

“Experiencing nature, the landscape, and the built and natural environments that surround us has the power to transform our being. But truly the most powerful part of the experience is our personal interpretation of it. The artist’s responsibility is to interpret the world, not merely to document it; to imprint the stamp of their own experience upon everything they create, and therefore make every subject they tackle new and fresh through their conception. Real magic comes when a viewer encounters the art and makes their own deduction of the artist’s conception.”

Taiga in Green is part of my series titled **Houses, Landscapes, Flowers & Dreams**. The series of over thirty works is a group of poetry and painting pairings; the poems and art unite interactively, the poems enhancing the art and the art giving visual substance to the words. Nature is the inspiration for this collection of words and images and urges people to view our environment differently. This body of work is a synthesis of my ultimate vision of nature, interpreted as pure, paradisiacal and infallible. It is a vision of the world where people are guests of a majestic and sacred place – not despoilers, exploiters and profiteers. I am pointing towards the mystery and wonder of things, and hope people will take away a new sense of awe and respect for our precious world. Overall, the series tackles the themes of environmentalism, humanity’s need to live symbiotically with nature, and a neo-Romantic view of the world.