

PERSONAL STATEMENT
ART INVOLVING THE ANIMAL AND THE EVOLUTION
TOWARDS THE GLITTER PAINTINGS. 1995-1997.
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"When Darwin arrived on the scene with his theory of evolution it had been long established that animals did not have souls and since it now looked as though man was an animal, a crisis arose....."

Desmond Morris, The Human Animal.

It is this existentialist idea that animals have souls that eliminate an elitism between the worlds of the natural animal and the municipal human. The necessity of intellectualising, and Morris's zoological aethism manages to deconstruct the myth of human importance. The view was...

'.....that mankind had big souls and animals had small ones. Humans travelled first class to the other world. Animals travelled in the hold-except perhaps for a few favourite dogs that were allowed to go tourist class....'

Evolution in this sense is the human unification with the animal. The relationship of these two duality's interests me further in their inter-relationship of contemporary new age spirituality. Animals are used in popular culture to rectify our human existence by becoming guardians, mentors and spiritual guides in an effort to justify our developmental growth; by this I mean our evolution away from nature to the security from nature in the municipal. Morris once again can explain.

'.....for animals there is only the present.....they are only concerned with dying when they face immediate danger, reacting in different ways of defence.....for us, having contemplated death and disliked the idea. there was a need to find our own particular kind of protection. Because we could envisage it, we were, in a sense, permanently threatened by it and needed a major strategy to defeat it. From ancient times we have found an answer, we conceived an afterlife....'

I do admit to being romanticised by these interpretations of spirituality and the ways in which the nature of being human involves raising questions in an attempt to understand our own existence.

...nobody has been able to prove or disprove the existence of the 'other world' but it has been a great boon to all those who can believe in it, giving them hope that clearly protects them from the fear of dying....'

These ideas are accentuated in literary circles and made available to us as customers in book stores under sections that are titled personal growth. The literary community has emerged to aid the spiritual condition of human existence and has based it in forms of psychology. This is so the spiritualist debate can be preserved and further more, legitimised on the grounds that it is scientific. With the notion of science comes the notion of authenticity. These self awareness programmes are not new, but are an indication of the millennium in which we reside.

To generate these ideas aesthetically I use an airbrush. My influence has been the fermentation of spirituality from the 1960's as the airbrush was a popular source of fine art making in this period. It wasn't until the 1960's with the decline of Pop Art and the advent of new realism, did the airbrush come into its own with the fine arts. The airbrushes thematic approach also encompasses Morris's ideals on decoration.

.....art is also concerned with decoration, with making things startling and unusual..... the transformation of the ordinary and the unremarkable into the extraordinary and the remarkable. It does this by decorating the plain, by amplifying the quiet and by exaggerating the modest.....'

....art has been mystical more often than documentary, magical more than imitative, emblematic more than figurative.....'

Glitter dust supports these ideas by being the transcendent medium, a medium which will not be at potential until gilded by a light that is either artificial intelligence or ultra violet.

Individual particles create the whole, and sets to accentuate the continued theme of duality, relationships and connections between things.

The slides I have included show these relationships in regards to the animal, and the idea of spirituality as abstract - where materials assimilate a notion. They also set to emphasize an evolution, from something that starts bacterially and evolves through pattern, in this case the pattern of the stripe, into a human behaviour. Desmond Morris explains in this way.

"....everything we do has an inborn, genetic basis and all our activities have something in common with other species. Uniquely, however, we have built on there *animal patterns*, exaggerating and elaborating them to an amazing degree and sometimes suppressing them with damaging consequences."

.....there are illusionary escapes of several kinds....the taking of drugs as relief from the tedium or the intense pressure of city life has been commonplace for thousands of years.....for many communities they have become the popular crutch that props people up through the depressing day and hideous night.....or harmless alternative of fantasy dreaming. Through novels, films and television programmes, they live out exciting lives by Proxy.....'

Glitter is also used to seduce as an object of beauty. When comparing this notion to the beauty in fashion, clothing becomes a personal signal that attracts a form of materialistic attention. The attention is material in value as the sparkle connotes value, style and decorum in interpretation.

Spirituality can also be interpreted into notions of beauty but on a metaphysical plane. I interpret this beauty as internal tranquillity. I believe art to reach this plane, especially when it is noted that the history of art originated through the reading of biblical history in the cathedrals of Europe.

Glitter is an important medium for generating these ideas because of the light it produces. It is light which is used throughout history as the divine source, the symbol that represents purity in spirit.

I have used glitter balls as a Maori source to psychedelic kina and in reference to the pukepuke balls on korowai. The lineal element in the majority of my paintings is associated to the first lines of whakapapa in weaving. Line can be used to represent so much and in my latest work the line resembles the piupiu as a contemporary form of dress.