

art and cake

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Tertium Organum, Traversing Space at CFAER



Pamela Boden and Gordon Onslow Ford, "Tertium Organum, Traversing Space," Center for the Arts Eagle Rock, Photo Credit Lorraine Heitzman.

Ouspensky and the Mysterious and Mysticism in Art

CENTER FOR THE ARTS EAGLE ROCK, EAGLE ROCK
THROUGH OCTOBER 15, 2022

Throughout history there have been times when artists have coalesced around a striking new idea, a manifesto, or a charismatic individual. One such confluence of artists and ideas is explored in *Tertium Organum, Traversing Space*, a fascinating and deeply researched exhibit at the Center for the Arts Eagle Rock, curated by Laura Whitcomb. The ideas that underpin this show encompass many disciplines, from art and architecture, mathematics and music, to various forms of mysticism. The origins of these ideas were inspired by a text written by P.D. Ouspensky in his book, *Tertium Organum: A Key to the Enigmas of the World*, published in 1912. Among the many topics addressed in his book is his belief that the subjective and objective world are entwined, and that our interior, psychic lives are as real and legitimate as our perceptions of the physical world that we normally take for reality. Ouspensky was influenced by George Gurdjieff, a late nineteenth century philosopher, mystic and author of *The Fourth Way*, a book that garnered international attention through his promotion of self-transformation and enlightenment. By synthesizing, expanding and disseminating Gurdjieff's ideas, Ouspensky influenced artists such as Kandinsky, Malevich and The Suprematists, and more recently and locally, the Dynaton group in Northern California. There can be no doubt that these and many other visual artists and musicians found such holistic concepts liberating.

The artists in this show represent a small part of the legacy that can be traced directly or indirectly to *Tertium Organum*. Some have a historical or personal connection to Ouspensky, while the contemporary artists explore consciousness and dualities in the spirit of his writings. A few have had residencies at the Lucid Art Foundation in Inverness, California, the organization fostered by the Lucid Art movement established by Gordon Onslow Ford with Fariba Bogzaran. All the work aligns with Ouspensky in some manner, and the historical work, in particular, reveals efforts to imagine that which had previously been unimaginable.

Putting aside for a moment the concepts of *Tertium Organum* and the artifacts on display at CFAER, it should be said that the paintings, prints and sculptures are engaging on their own merits. The artworks, spanning several generations, possess a vitality and beauty, and the show has a welcome cohesiveness, thanks to the careful curation.

Some of the earliest work in the show, and among the strongest, are the sculptures by Pamela Boden, and Harry Kramer. Boden's *Nautilus*, created in 1953, is made from wood and modeling paste and suggests an architectural structure. Open rectangular elements have the effect of something between a geometric and organic process of growth, like that of a coral reef. Modest and earthy, it looks very much of its time; a modern object, pared-down to essential lines, but with its handmade qualities intact. In Kramer's *Lindwurm 2*, the artist has made a kinetic wire sculpture that is as much about its exterior form as it is about its interior movement. The enclosed, but still visible interior, allows the viewer to witness the mechanisms that power the internal actions, perhaps alluding to biological functions. The shape resembles a sort of portal that is also a closed system, like a depiction of the inner workings of a circulatory system. There are hints of structures that Lee Bontecou employed, but the airiness of Kramer's wire mesh keeps things light and fanciful.

Among the sculptors, Vincent Pocsik straddles the two camps in this show; he is a contemporary artist who was raised with ties to Gurdjieff's teachings. His three sculptures, *Formidable*, *Ashes to Ashes*, and *The Seeker* are vertical wood sculptures that are like totems, painted white and revealing dark areas that have been burned. Though static, they appear to flicker like dancing flames, giving them movement and energy. They are thoughtfully paired with Lindsey Nobel's paintings, each defying the stasis of their respective mediums. Nobel, a painter who did a residency at the Lucid Art Foundation, has a style that seems rooted in abstract expressionism. *Shelter in Nature #2* is a large, muscular painting that suggests the human figure surrounded by shades of green and blue that conjures foliage and water. She paints loosely and the white organic shapes are activated by her sketchy drawing, resulting in a satisfying and emotional painting.

Another painter of note is Gordon Onslow Ford. His paintings, *Untitled* and *Man in Space* hint at his background in Surrealism, but lean more towards Kandinsky and Klee. Painted with black ink on paper, they are cruder than the work that came out of the Bauhaus, but they show his interest in fantastical spaces and interconnections. These become more fully realized in *Everywhere*, a painting, made more than a decade later. *Everywhere* is a trippy jumble of concentric circles and confetti-like marks. Drips of paint create depth, like sgraffito, although Ford layers his paint in an additive process. The end result is an image that is effervescent and full of movement and mystery.

Printmakers and photographers are also represented in the show, along with several vitrines of related printed matter. Michael Bowen, who was active in Los Angeles art circles before relocating to the Bay Area, was involved in all manner of esoteric studies, and was a co-founder of the Visionary art movement. His etching, *Untitled* reflects the influence of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky by way of Carl Jung. Additionally, there was a performance by Beck + Col during the opening reception. The following are two videos by Eric Minh Swenson: the first documents the performance with parts of the soundtrack from compositions by Gurdjieff and De Hartmann, and the second link shows the installation.

BECK AND COL AT CENTER FOR THE ARTS EAGLE ROCK:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Clq2G1sA5U&t=2s>

TERTIUM ORGANUM : TRAVERSING SPACE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S23kU-qvHNc&t=95s>

On October 15 at 4 pm there will be a closing talk and performance with the lucid art scholar Fariba Bogzaran titled *Traversing Inner Spaces through the World of Dreams*. She will be giving a slide talk on the work of Matta, Remedios Varo and Onslow Ford.

This show will be followed by a second exhibit curated by Laura Whitcomb, part two of *Mysticism and Mathematics*, entitled *The Golden Ratio: A Procession*. For more information, or to RSVP: info@cfaer.org or 323 561-3044 x 223

Tertium Organum, Traversing Space

Curated by Laura Whitcomb

Center For the Arts Eagle Rock

August 22- October 15, 2022

Artists: Jeremy Anderson, Pamela Boden, Lynn Chadwick, Mark di Suvero, Harry Kramer, Wifredo Lam, Roberto Matta, Gordon Onslow Ford, Wolfgang Paalen, Paulina Peavy, Martin Puryear, Fariba Bogzaran, Michael Bowen, Mary Brogger, Claire Chambless, Marco Minaya, Lindsey Nobel, Vincent Pocsik, Ron Reihel





