

MIYA ANDO

NDM: Can you please tell me a little about your background in Zen?

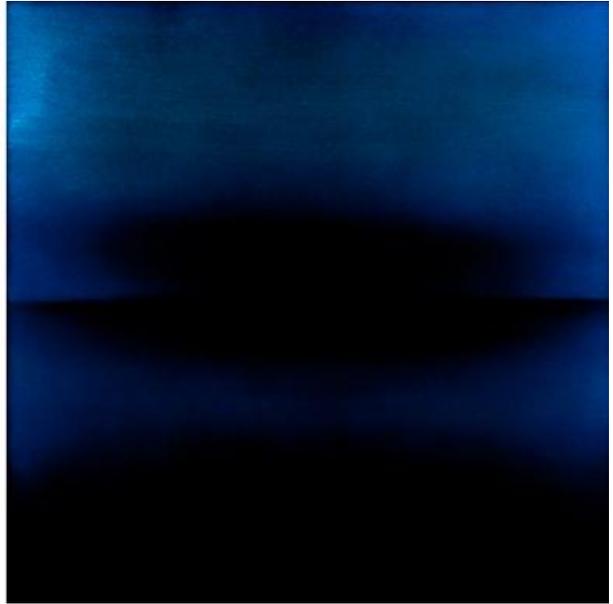
Miya Ando: My background in Buddhism is that I grew up in a Nichiren temple in Okayama. I have a personal interest in the Zen sect of buddhism, namely the connection of reductivism in Zen thought and American minimalism. I am very influenced by Zen practices such as the tea ceremony and concepts such as nothingness and MuShin - total absorption in a task, Mu (nothingness) and non-duality. My sect of Nichiren is a very old sect (from 1200's) that is based on the Lotus Sutra (the sutra which is based on the last words spoken by the historical Buddha) and like Zen, is a Mahayana school.

NDM: What was it like growing up in the Zen Buddhist temple? How exactly did it impact your creativity and your art work?

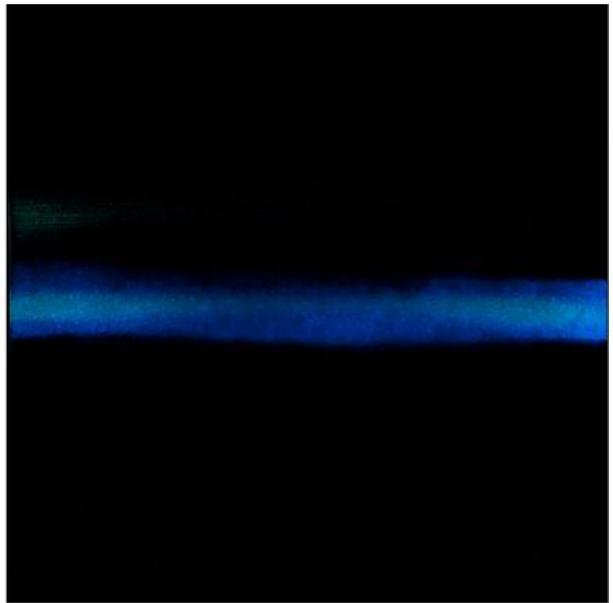
Miya Ando: My temple is in Okayama, surrounded on 2 sides by rice fields, it is very beautiful - it is a small, community temple and I really loved having ritual and religion as part of my daily life. My grandfather was head priest of our temple for over 50 years, he was a Buddhist priest to me but also someone who loved and took care of me, along with my grandmother, aunts and uncles. I was a very devout since I was a little girl, I now feel that I have my temple and practice in my heart. I've made a commitment to my family and temple that I would approach our traditions and heritage of sword making (steel work) and Buddhism with respect.



'Ghosts' prints on aluminum.



'luminous transcendent'



'luminous transcendent'

NDM: Can you tell me about "MuShin" and how you apply this in the process of making art?

Miya Ando: Mushin is the total absorption in a single task - meditation, prayer, sanding metal. I approach my studio practice as a practice of Mushin - a complete focus on the physical task of creating my works. The intention is to go toward a state of non-duality and loss of ego.

NDM: When you talk about nothingness; how would you describe this nothingness, do you mean nothingness such as Sunyata?

Miya Ando: According to the Buddhist concept of Sunyata, the impermanent nature of form means that nothing possesses essential, enduring identity. This is the nature of my work.



30" x 18" liquid graphite on 100% cotton paper



Steel paintings: all medium: steel, patina, pigment, automotive lacquer

NDM: When you talk about going into a "state of non duality", do you mean becoming one with the work; loss of subject/object awareness during the process of making the work? Or do you mean that you are using the art-making process as a means of meditation to attain a non-dual state on a permanent basis? As a form of transcendence of the egoic state?

Miya Ando: Yes, I consider my studio practice to be a meditative one; a practice in the loss of the ego via absorption/focus in a task (in my case that would be the task of working with steel - the process of creating my

works involves some extreme activities that involve working with fire, serious caustics, sharp tools, loud sanding, acid etching, heavy vapors that require a respirator - many of these activities call for total focus given the intensity of the activity and the very short working time, this I have found to be helpful in my practice of concentration and focus). The state of non-duality is on wherein there is a loss of difference between the viewer and that which the viewer perceives. I do see the practice of art as potentially transformative and can be transcendent.



Steel paintings: all medium: steel, patina, pigment, automotive lacquer



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NDM: Can you tell me more about your family's history in sword making and how this came to impact the materials in your artwork?

Miya Ando: My family (Ando) made swords and this has always been part of our family identity, mythology and history. I was always in awe and some fear of the swords, they are incredible objects, quite powerful, worthy of much respect. I love the aspect that the creator of the sword must purify the self before the sword is created, I love this notion that the energy and kokoro (spirit) of the creator is transferred to the object. Of course steel resonated with me from the very beginning. The Ando's, we are very proud of our steel blood - I promised my family that I would honor the material and

that my intention with regard to my works would be correct since I represent a tradition.

As you may know, my family went from making swords into the Buddhist priesthood. Both have impacted and informed my path as an artist. In addition to his, I was watching my dad weld car parts together in the garage since I was a little child. I feel at home in a metal shop and working with steel is something I am honored to do.

NDM: Do you practice sword fighting techniques of any kind?

Miya Ando: No, I do not.



Steel paintings: all medium: steel, patina, pigment, automotive lacquer



Miya Ando photo by Anthony_Gamboa

NDM: "Ghosts' prints on aluminum" seem to be a departure from your other work (Seascapes); can you tell me how you came to make this work?

Miya Ando: The ghost series is about non-duality, actually. The difference is that there is a figurative element to the works. The idea was that the surface of the work is reflective - perhaps there is another being reflected back - the work become a window, the work becomes a trace of something very subtle. Perhaps the ghost is an iteration of a quality we all have universally within ourselves. I am very interested in these very subtle traces of what could be nothingness.

For more info visit

www.miyaando.com