

Cheselyn Amato - General Statement

March 29, 2005

I am interested in the sacred, in sanctity, in the presence of divinity in the everyday, in life lived every day. I make work as a tool to encourage and generate thoughts, feelings and actions that honor the most expansive in us, our capacity for love, generosity, and humility. I love spectacle, and the experiences of awe and the sublime.

I am an individual, a Vietnam-era/civil rights movement American, a fruits-of-feminism woman, a Post-Holocaust Jew, a wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister, a friend, artist, professor, and citizen. What is a way of being to fulfil all these callings? To find specific identity, to cultivate full consciousness, to fulfil obligations and to enjoy the delights and endure the toils of the every day is the substance of being and becoming, the beginning and end of desire.

I am committed as a person in the world and in my vision as artist to the notion of authenticity of being in which love governs. This authenticity means constructive balance between striving and accepting, between desire and satisfaction, and between labor and rest.

My work is both process and product. I must work, labor my way toward the values I hold each and every time. The work is a means to understanding and fulfilling the opportunity we receive as human beings. The processes of making emerge out of the need and desire to find pace, like breathing, like the surf. The combination of effort, labor, repetition, idea, image, and passion seem to lead to the experiences of liberation, freedom, beauty, love, compassion, recognition, revelation and action.

Big questions and every tiny sensation are of equal interest to me. I love pondering what we, human being, are, and I love experiencing infinitesimally subtle shifts in thought, feeling, perception, and action; and in color, pattern, arrangement, possibility, and significance. I am committed to beauty that is revealing, that both transports and grounds at the same time, and that exacerbates the sense of living forces.

Having an interdisciplinary sensibility, I use materials and forms – currently installation, sculpture, collage, and inkjet printed montage – as tools to explore and amplify the qualities of immediacy and authenticity. Any material, gesture, action, or appearance can become imbued with grace. The kind of beauty that interests me is that which honors experience itself with emphasis on sensation, vitality, inheritance, invention, re-invention, and awe. Through dynamics between aesthetic sensations that are primary, direct, imitative, simulative, or simulated, acknowledgement is encouraged that we can never make a final, factual physical statement about presence or absence, but rather engage in the awe of coming close, of immanence and nearness.

I work in an interdisciplinary mode in order to envisage this poetics of spirit. I feel compelled to use whatever media and methods necessary – 2-D, 3-D, and/or 4-D – to activate this world of awe and of immanence. I generally work over a several year period on a topic under which a number of bodies of work will be generated

For twenty-five years, my work has been informed by and committed to Judaism and Kabbalah, the mystical way of Torah. I am essentially interested in creating circumstances or occasions for the acknowledgment, celebration, and fullest exercising of human being – an opportunity to stand in awe

with dignity and grace. As much as I build these circumstances, I also use them, both the process and the place. More recently, I recognize myself fundamentally, as a temple builder. Out of the need to reconstruct myself in this universe comes the desire to stand in a temple in which I feel truly comfortable while honoring all that I inherit.

My current project, *The Tree of Life Chronicles*, is dedicated in visual aesthetic form to Jewish mystical revelation. The project is comprised of paintings on paper, collage, photocopy transfer and montage, digital prints, photo installation, and large-scale interdisciplinary installation. The visual history that follows documents, along with selected earlier works, the different dimensions of *The Tree of Life* project that have already been completed as well as a comprehensive description of the large-scale installation in progress, *The Tree of Life: SWAGS & SWOONS*, for which there is a working model.

