

Cheselyn Amato - The Chaya Chesed Love Life Codex
Mini-Retrospective: Selected Works 1988-2017
AXIS Gallery, Sacramento, CA – October 6-29, 2017



The Chaya Chesed Love Life Codex is comprised of a selection of works done during a nearly thirty-year span between 1988 and 2017. This selection has been made to chart and create a context for thought and feeling about several threads that have persisted in my work: presence and absence; desire; resonance between I and Thou, above and below, here and there, the primal experience of is-ness and being-ness; sheer sensation of existing; of absolute exuberance and enchantment; being in the state of one-ment; of awe, delight, and sublimity; of absolute broken-heartedness, of darkness, separation, chaos, fear, sadness, and grief; and of the opportunity of open broken-heartedness. These particular works reflect the times when, through the artmaking process, my intention and will have been to find a way to bridge or dissolve, assuage or integrate the many dualities that appear experientially. When the one-ing happens it is called open broken-heartedness, a state of being in which multiplicity and union exist in perfect harmony. These works are about the process of one-ing, of letting go of separation.

Chaya is the English transliteration for the word in Hebrew meaning life. My parents wished to name me after a living relative as is Jewish custom, and so I was named after my paternal grandfather, Chaim, the masculine form of the word life. In seeking a name for me, they were also attracted to the name of a colleague, Ches, at Grossingers, a resort in the Catskills of NY, where they worked and met as young people. And so, the story is that my dad came up with the name Cheselyn. Little did they know that they were also naming me after an element in the Jewish mystical Tree of Life, Chesed, that means Unconditional Loving-kindness. Additionally and finally, Amato means love. I believe that when we receive our names, we are also receiving the name of our life's journey, the one that we will each take as it has been written and by freewill fulfilled. I have been striving to meet the calling of my name because it has been given to me to do. This exhibition's title is constructed of the Hebrew transliterated words and the English words reflecting one another: life love love life. I believe that "all that is" is a beautiful reflection, a shadow, of the great mystery that is all. The seeming gap, from sublime to harrowing, that we inevitably experience simply by being human exists as we exist in order to reveal and amplify this wild ride of being and becoming.

I have been compelled, without cessation, by the desire to dissolve all distances, all separation betwixt, and there have been others in so many terms equally compelled, one being Simone Weil. The words quoted about her in *Work #24, Desire*, capture precisely the experience that I have had in my life. The word metaxu means the resonant space between where meeting occurs and the word urphanomen, as applied by Goethe, means primary, fundamental, irreducible, archetypal phenomena. It is both of these qualities that I seek to know as a person. My artmaking process has served as a means to and a document of my efforts to arrive at metaxu and to experience urphanomen. In life, I have often experienced a strong dynamic between awareness and sensation of presence and absence, meaning and overwhelming uncertainty, and as many dualities and dialectics as can be named. *Work #1, Presence/Absence*, was made during an active experience of presence and absence in a dance with one another, and as such, the piece is artifact, vestige, evidence and continuing living enactment of that dance of my soul-spirit at that moment.

My urge has been to embody the brilliant, radiant light of greatest good, truth and beauty (*Works #10 and #23 – Eternal Light and Well in the Desert*). There are times when I have been struggling to see the forest through the trees and when I see also see others and/or conditions in the world pulled down and at times, doomed. At those times, I seek to overcome those conditions with love, light and whatever effort necessary to overwhelm those forces that draw me and us into an inconsolable and irreconcilable broken-heartedness. These selected works are those in which an opening pierced the broken-heartedness, creating open broken-heartedness that became a path to once again being filled with faith, trust, hope, willingness and joy. When there is rupture, disruption, eruption, then open broken-heartedness is a path that can re-awaken the memory and image of goodness and justice; it becomes a portal to taking action and striving for positive transformation. Tikkun is a Hebrew word that means healing and tikkun olam means healing the world. Acting to heal is something that we can do. Via the humility of making space for transformation (tzim tzum), meditation to receive our greatest human potential (human body/tree of life), and by inviting exquisite radiant eternal light to flood us, we can assist in the triumph of beauty and goodness.

