

THIS JUST IN!

Artist's comments, on the occasion of opening of exhibit, January 14, 2022
Staunton Augusta Art Center, Staunton, VA.

Firstly: appreciation.

I wish to express my appreciation for being offered a forum in which I'm helped to share my sculptural images with others. I appreciate; and call attention to, Carolyn, and Hunter, and our volunteers, for accommodating an old man whose exigencies and devolving mortality preclude driving at night or in heavy traffic. I laud the support and interests of all fellow members and friends of SAAC who share my life-long devotion to making and enjoying the visual arts.

Now let me take a shot ... certain to go wide of the mark ... at suggesting in words the experience of being in thrall to the strange habit of doing "art".

We recall the famous observation by Sherlock Holmes: "we may see, but fail to *perceive*." The camera, x-ray, radar all see, we might agree. But the *perception* of the world and its meaning, tho' we all share the experience of attempting it, remains unique to each of us, as part of our idiosyncratic self-identification as well as expression.

So 'tis the perception of things, of places and events and their provenance that is the unique modeler of each of us. The appearance of things, shapes, color, texture and arrangements; and the associations we have twixt them and our fellows builds our perceptual world, as well as our notions of ourselves. And for those of us who fancy art these perceptions and emotions seem to hog center stage, so to speak. Our appreciation amplifies their effects ... keeps us "on the prod", as my Texas friends say.

We respond, and attempt to satisfy that restlessness of perception and imagination by: making ... "stuff". "Thangs" as we say, in West Virginia. Some may weave fabric and design clothing, others make furniture; some build racing cars, some stage plays and yes: some make money! I make "Thangs". They are called "sculpture", or "art".

Where do the actual designs come from? They just happen: perhaps as an unconscious resolution of perception, amplified and filtered by my particular wiring and chemistry.? Like all artists I'm asked about this. Where do you get your ideas? Simple and truest answer:

"Why ... 'em ain't "ideas". 'Ey jis happen!"

And that's it: they "just happen". Images, shapes, scenes, conversations "'jis happen", unbidden and unending. And it's a fact, this has been a devil of a problem all my life! As a youngster these images would become seated so far down in front of objective reality they'd interfere with other activities, those going on outside my skull. Results often were scoldings and whippings for not paying attention, or for carelessness and forgetfulness.

That disconnect puzzled me. Wasn't until my eighties I understood that all our perceptions and impressions arrive and are recorded, but only after first passing through a sort of stage scrim, that works like a filter in a rock music mixer amp. Certain "frequencies" are amplified more than others. The "distortion" recorded creates the so-called style of the artist: truth passed through a feed-back loop?

I realized that for most folks this scrim is thin or even missing. In my case tho' upon it played an interior pageantry; real to the point of distraction from external "reality". So not withstanding appearances I was in fact, "paying attention". Unfortunately it was not to what parents, bosses and associates were addressing. I realized that my experience of "life" was analogous to that of a less distracted observer attempting to watch two ...or more ... movies displayed on one screen, simultaneously.

So my accidents and other infelicities was not a matter of perfidy, narcissism, sloth, or carelessness but was actually operational. The challenge of sorting layered inputs was the "normal" way my brain worked. Perhaps not totally blameless but this wafted away the ordure of inattention that hung heavy.

In sum then, tho' I fail to achieve a logical model of my creative process, sufficient to describe it in words, I do appreciate the separation between just seeing, and idiosyncratic perception. Tis in the latter that "art" resides I suppose.

John "Jack" Chaffee, Jan 12, 2022