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Symbolism of the Cosmic Dance of Shiva in the South-Indian Temple Dance Tradition

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osity it evokes. A similar curiosity about spatial relationships will compel me to continue this kind of work.

I have further explored this structuring method with 16 paper models in my recent book, *Generatrix* [1]. *Generatrix* explores the movement between two and three dimensions of a given pattern, with an emphasis on curves. A single sheet of material will bend along curved score lines that act as a hinge or joint while adding structural strength to the sheet when it is stabilized in a three-dimensional position. This method is a means to produce lightweight curvilinear structures, where each sheet acts as both skin and structure.

### Reference

1. Terry Rosenberg, *Generatrix* (Omaha, NE: UNO Editions, University of Nebraska, 1995).

## AS ABOVE, SO BELOW: THE MANIFESTATION OF THE UNIVERSE AS A MIRROR TO CONSCIOUSNESS

Donald Sanders (artist), 51 West 81st Street, Apt. 5-J, New York, NY 10024, U.S.A.

*Donald Sanders's artwork was presented at the conference "The Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena," Villa Mondo Migliore, Rocca di Papa, Italy, 27 June–2 July 1994. The artist has provided this Artist's Statement to accompany these published proceedings.*

My paintings were essentially inspired by the work of the seventeenth-century philosopher Robert Fludd, but they ultimately came to represent a great deal more: the integration of the universe and its sciences with a totality of "Sameness." They are about the "Act" of all creation, and while there are obvious religious overtones in Fludd's writing, my personal concern is the integration of all philosophical processes, specifically in the Jungian approach to creation relating to the collective unconscious and the archetype.

After the series was completed and hung around me, beginning with the *Great Darkness* and ending with the *Primeval Duality*, I came to realize that these paintings are indicative not only of theories of the start of the universe but also of the beginning of any creative act—as in the *tabula rasa* with which every artist, scientist, child sets out—moving on to the "wheel" of

stages with its particular psychological obstacles and solutions. The paintings took on a mandala effect (Color Plate A No. 2). They became an emotional barometer that I could literally use to find where I was at a particular moment. As above, so below.

The paintings give a sense that the universe in its beginnings—the "spark of life"—is actually inherent in each of us and in the living fibers of all physical beings. To me they show a thread that is woven throughout. I suppose in a way the universe, in a daily theatrical and symbolic manner, is constantly being born and remodeled to return to the origins of its own birth. It is comforting to think that darkness has great potential and that the void is not always disturbing. I wonder if the before knew that the beginning was near.

## SYMBOLISM OF THE COSMIC DANCE OF SHIVA IN THE SOUTH-INDIAN TEMPLE DANCE TRADITION

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*Jadzia Donatowicz presented an illustrated full-length paper at the conference "The Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena,"*

*Villa Mondo Migliore, Rocca di Papa, Italy, 27 June–2 July 1994. She was invited to submit this Artist's Statement for inclusion in these proceedings.*

In the *Kurma Purana*, one of the main sources of Hindu mythology, Shiva reveals his nature:

I'm the originator, the god abiding in supreme bliss. I, the yogi, dance eternally . . . (Ku.P.2.4.33)

Having said this, the Lord of Yogis, the supreme God, danced, showing his formidable, supreme reality . . . (Ku.P.2.5.1)

In the spotless sky the yogis saw him dancing, the Great God who is Lord of all beings, whose *maya* is all that is here, and who activates universe. (Ku.P.2.5.2–4) [1]

The sacred dance traditions of the world show an amazing abundance of imagined forms through which people everywhere have sought to relate themselves to the wonder of existence.

Hindu tradition has it that dance was not of human making, but that, similar to the sacred texts—*Vedas*—it is the fruit of an initial Divine Revelation. Brahma, the Creator himself, is regarded as being the author of the original treatise—the *Natya-Shastra*, revealed to Bharata-Muni (hence *Bharatanatyam*), the holy monk. The symbolism of hand gestures—*mudras*—plays a fundamental role in *Bharatanatyam*. In dancing, they are the constituents of a language meant to con-

**Fig. 2. Jadzia Donatowicz, *chandra taradi*: "the moon and the stars." (Photo: Bernhard Kammel)**





Fig. 3. Jazdia Donatowicz, Shiva Nataraja: Lord of the Dance. (Photo: Bernhard Kammel)

vey all expressible facts and the harmonies of a dance-poem. The vocabulary of this hand language is a very rich one. The meaning of many of the gestures can be easily grasped, as they copy nature (Fig. 2); there is also a variety of diagrammatic and symbolic gestures, as well as gestures that are pure convention.

Among the lofty ideals of India, symbolism plays an important role. The statue of Nataraja (Fig. 3), a great symbol of Shiva's cosmic dance, is full of symbols. In order to save the world, Shiva, in his perverse power, dances the cosmos into existence, upholds its existence, and dances it again out of existence, wildly laughing, scattering ashes from his body so that the world may be renewed. This is the *Tandava* dance of Shiva, as Kala-Mahakala, the Destroyer and Destroyer of Destruction.

Another dance, the *Ananda Tandava*, "dance of bliss in the hall of consciousness," is Shiva's dance within the heart of man. His dancing limbs convey by

their movements and symbols Shiva's fivefold action of creation, maintenance, dissolution, veiling-unveiling and liberation. The raised leg shows the liberating freedom of his dance, the drum raised by the right hand sounds the note of creation, the flame in the left hand flickers in the change brought about by destruction, the right hand grants protection and assures the maintenance of life. The dancer's foot is planted on the infant shape of the demon Amnesia and accentuates the vertical, cosmic axis of the God's body. The movement of the dancer around this axis is encircled by flames. Shiva dances everywhere: in the red glow of the setting sun, on the cremation grounds and in the temple of Chidambaram, the center of the Universe. That place is within his heart. Everywhere is Shiva's gracious dance made manifest. The creation of the Universe is the result of that dynamic energy. Dynamism or movement is the

origin of *Gati* and *Laya* (rhythm) in the language of music and dance. Then again, movement is the origin of sound (*Dhwani*), from which music takes its birth. Thus, the Universe is bound by rhythm and sound, the origin of dance and music, respectively. Accordingly, in one sense dance and music take their birth with the creation of the Universe.

The myths of man speak of the creation of the world as the dance of God. Shiva Nataraja sends pulsating waves of awaking sound through matter, thereby seducing it to life from lethargy. And matter dances, appearing round about him as an aureole of fiery emanations. Dancing, he creates and sustains the manifold phenomena of the universe.

Inspired by Shiva's cosmic dance, many scientists discovered new symbolism for certain physical phenomena and cosmological ideas. The aesthetic vision of a dancing God who creates and destroys allows one to talk symbolically about "dancing elementary particles" and the continuous processes of creation and annihilation in micro- and macrocosmos. Shiva's *damaru* (drum) beats the rhythm of the eternal cycle of an expanding and contracting Universe. It is the answer to the astronomer's models of galaxy dynamics, pulsating stars and supernovae that "die," whereby out of their remnants new stars are born, as both creation and destruction are simultaneous.

The sacred traditions of the world are an abundant repository of human symbols as metaphors of the Mystery. Rhythmic sound, in cosmogonic myths, is a root of all creation; and the gods are—or the God is—the formulated power through which the life-force manifests itself. Truth, being beyond sound and rhythm, is the invisible divine center round which all creation dances.

### Reference

1. The English source for these three translations from the *Kurma Purana* is Stella Keramrisch, *The Presence of Shiva*, Motilal Banarsidass, ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1988).