

Nancy Good

Artist's Statement

“MEANING: The Search For”

At first thought, embarking on a visual interpretation of humanity's eons-old search for meaning was daunting. However, researching “search for meaning” within various religious and philosophical teachings, I began to understand that for these teachings, they were often focusing more on defining what is the meaning of life, rather than the utterly common and universal search that each human being undertakes at some point (or even all points) of their life..

As a lifelong explorer, in the physical sense of travel, hiking, backpacking, river rafting, etc., I simplified my research to what I was directly familiar with; evaluating the tools I use to search for a destination. Maps, of course! At one point in my early adulthood, topographical maps were the wallpaper of choice for select rooms of my homes. These rooms would also contain additional tools: hiking boots, skis, walking sticks, tents, sleeping bags, backpacks, rafting and fishing equipment, and more minute items to take care of my physical well-being. But key among all of this equipment, and where my search would always be rooted, would be my beloved maps. The mysteries they reveal within their flat, 2-dimensional printing held me rapt with anticipation of what I would encounter on the ground, in real life. Was the water/spring noted on the map still there? What about the trail I was seeking? Landmarks of certain elevations could roughly be discerned, but what about the actual landmarks of interesting trees or boulder clusters? Will I find my ultimate destination?

My topographical fandom is evident in this series. Abstracted elevation lines and allusions to cartography play more than a supporting role as key elements. Plays on words, hidden messages and symbols created by diverse mediums also “guide” the viewer along. Additionally, so many elements are hidden in a way that the viewer must physically shift perspective or position in order to see them, signifying that in our personal search for meaning, we must often look at things in a new light or different position in order to see what may be right before our eyes.

I'm often asked about my choice to leave the large canvases unstretched and unbound. This is very intentional. In our search for meaning, if we are held constrained by our limited opinions or beliefs we may find ourselves without the flexibility and freedom to change.

Now to visually expressing the emotional aspect of our search. Take, for example, the natural world around us. It is undeniably beautiful, often feeling peaceful at times. But, within that beauty and peace, the studious observer will always find dissonance, disarray, decay, conflict, danger, death, and evidence of actual harm or a rending of wholeness.

That said, we humans still, again and again, seek harmony, peace, or resolution to the conflict we observe or experience. As an artist, I feel one of my most important roles is to visually express the human experience. This experience is not always what we want or hope it to be. We have sadness. We know anger. We feel confusion. We see injustice. How to represent this dissonance (or disharmony) on canvas? And, how then to bring it to resolution (or harmony) without it feeling obvious or cliché'd?

In this regard, I am also grateful for my lifelong experience as a musician. It is rare that even in the most “happy” of songs, there isn't a bit of musical dissonance that is soon brought to conclusion with an expected 3-note triad. Some of the most beautiful chords in the world hold within them tension and conflict intended to stir emotions (and sometimes even discomfort) in the listener before those chords are resolved to near angelic harmony. Translating this to our search for meaning, there will be many layers of a multitude of experiences that will move from chaotic to calm, from heartbreaking to joyous, from conflict to peace.

Visually, choosing colors that often conflict or even vibrate, or shapes and lines that don't move as the viewer expects them to, I hope to guide the viewer into searching for the visual dissonance. Sometimes it is overt and obvious. At other times, it is subtle and hidden. But it is always there. As, too, is the resolution into harmony or peace. Such is our search.

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