

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

AUDRIUS V. PLIOPLYS



For 40 years I have been both a professional artist and a neurologist-neuroscientist. My art is neo-conceptual: a metaphorical investigation of thinking and consciousness. I have transformed the artist's studio into a neurobiology research lab, merging neuroscience with art.

I have been artistically exploring the origins of thinking, thought and consciousness. Where does awareness come from? How is it that we are cognizant of ourselves and of those near us? What is it that makes us human?

Approaches have included large scale paintings, prints on paper, site-specific installations, and light sculptures with LED light systems. The underlying images are of my own previous art works. I transform them into exotic forms, just as our memories transform visual impulses into vast neuronal web-works. Multiple layers are assembled, modified and blended. Cerebral cortical neuronal drawings, superimposed and subtracted from the surrounding color, reveal deeper layers of thoughts and memories. My own MRI brain scans and electroencephalograms (brain waves) are interweaved. From neuronal complexity words, thoughts, and consciousness emerge.

Artistically, I am fully self-taught. The seed of art was planted by a childhood friend in Toronto. During medical school at the University of Chicago, I started painting, and the passion for art grew uncontrollably. After internship, I left medicine entirely, to create art full-time. Three years later, after many exhibits and positive critical reviews, I started to feel guilty that I was not helping others with my knowledge of neurology. I realized that I must return to medicine, and at the same time, merge my art with neuroscientific investigations.

I have had 45 individual art exhibits and participated in 98 group shows. In Chicago, my art is on permanent display at the Blue Man Group, Illinois Institute of Technology, University of Chicago, Blackstone Hotel, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, Brookfield Zoo, and Beverly Arts Center. In Minneapolis, eight pieces, including large scale ones, are on permanent display at the American Academy of Neurology, which opened two years ago. My paintings are in many museum collections internationally including the Art Institute and Museum of Contemporary Art, both in Chicago. A suite of my art books are displayed in a modern art museum near Marseilles, France. My installation piece, Mirror Neurons, graces the cover of the Oxford University Press book, Consciousness and the Social Brain.

In recognition of my work organizing the year-long Hope and Spirit program, a commemoration of the 20 million victims of Stalin's atrocities, I was designated Man of the Year for 2011 by the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture in Chicago. The previous year's recipient was the US senator from Illinois, Mr. Richard Durbin.

My neurologic investigations concentrated on cognitive disorders, from autism in children, to Alzheimer's disease in the elderly. For twenty years, I worked to improve the care provided to severely disabled cerebral palsy children, and reported the world's best survival rates. I have published 79 neurology articles and received \$2.8 million in research grants. I retired from neurology eight years ago, and am, again, engaged in art full-time.

