

ARTISTIC SCIENCE OR INTELLIGENT ART?

March 5th, at the Illinois Institute of Technology, there will be an opening of a new series of art works entitled “Emergence” by the noted artist and physician, Audrius Plioplys.

Audrone Simanonyte, [American Lithuanian](#), Chicago, February 28, 2009

Anyone who has any interest in Lithuanian art, will have heard the name of Audrius Plioplys. By his formal education, he is a physician—neurologist, who has been able to blend together the two aspects of his professional work: art and medicine. Because of his background, his efforts have resulted in art work which is totally unique. A. Plioplys started his art career with oil paintings, photography and installation art works. He then turned to conceptual art in which he visually and metaphorically started to investigate the origins of thinking and of consciousness. According to the artist, as a scientist he has tried to understand how the central nervous system works, and as an artist he has tried to present these insights to the art-viewing public. Thus, he has transformed a neurobiologic research laboratory into an artist’s studio—where neuroscientific research continues using visual-artistic means.

Using these concepts, over the past several years A. Plioplys has created several cycles of art work: “Neurotheology” (2000), “Thoughts from Under a Rock” (2003) and “Symphonic Thoughts” (2005). These art works have been displayed around the world, and in several prestigious galleries. In 2007, the University of Chicago and the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel obtained several of his large-scale works, and put them up for permanent public display. Realizing that important institutions very carefully select art for public display, the selection of this artist’s work should be taken as a very significant commendation.

Recently, A. Plioplys decided to retire from medicine to be able to devote himself full-time to his art work. His latest series is “Emergence” (2008), which consists of 18 separate images printed with Hewlett Packard printers using museum quality, archival pigmented inks and paper. The title of this series of works refers to two different sources. One aspect of emergence, is the artist’s own loss of health, partial loss of

vision, and the loss of his sister. In an artistic sense, the series is emerging from previous pieces that were in “Neurotheology” and “Thoughts from Under a Rock.”

Plioplys’s art works are astounding in the way they combine his medical and artistic “work object.” Just as in one sphere, as in the other, the “work object” is the brain. In his works, the underlying structure is that of photographs of human brain cells, which are then worked upon and modified, thus creating totally unique vistas, whose unifying theme is that nothing takes place coincidentally. In the opinion of the artist, art should not be self-referential. Art arises from creativity at the juncture of thought and science.

The artist explained that although the “Emergence” series arose from two previous serieses of art work, the images have been greatly transformed into entirely new pieces. The previous, older ones lose their image and their functions, during the transformation. The design, composition, size and colors have been changed. As the artist further explained, this series of works incorporates his own MRI brain scan images—many images in each piece (up to 30). Looking carefully at these pieces, you can find traces of the artist’s own brain scans and electroencephalogram tracings. The MRI images show the structure of the artist’s brain, and the electroencephalogram shows his brain’s electrical, physiologic activity. On the other hand, these additional elements are difficult to see. They were not meant to be illustrations for a medical text book. On first viewing, none of them are visible. These elements are very carefully hidden. But, with persistence of visual effort, they become apparent.

When asked why he used his own brain scans and electroencephalograms, as a neurologist, the artist’s answer was straight forward and quite natural. A. Plioplys said “Where does my art work originate from? From my brain. Thus, I am incorporating both anatomic images of my brain (MRI brain scans) and physiologic aspects of my brain’s activities (electroencephalograms). Secondly, with my health steadily deteriorating, my brain is taking over more aspects of my life. My brain’s activity is compensating for worsening physical disabilities.”

Translated from the original Lithuanian.

Color reproduction from the “Emergence” series: [Theory / Information](#).

