



## Bill Dambrova

VISITATIONS has been repackaged by phICA from an exhibition that opened briefly, then closed at The Icehouse, Phoenix, during March 2021. It contains two works which were not in the previous exhibition.

Since returning to Arizona in 2012 from a 10-year stint in Southern California, Bill Dambrova has enjoyed a visual artist trajectory that has been extraordinary in terms of having a studio where he is able to make work and successfully balancing his career as consultant in museum exhibition design throughout the United States. Bill and his artwork have been featured in various regional publications, and his art has been showcased in various solo and group exhibitions locally, regionally, and nationally, most recently in the 2020 Arizona Biennial at the Tucson Museum of Art. Most remarkably, however, is his growth in technical prowess and as a critical thinker, well-informed about Art History, tuned into what is happening in his material world, and realizing the long overdue need to revisit aspects of the Art History Canon.

More specifically, he believes that the dialog about mysterious, spiritual, visionary, and metaphysical elements which have been downplayed or mostly ignored in male artists' works in favor of male machoism and

bravado for most of the last century need to be brought forward to the table for review. While female artists, like Helma af Klint, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Agnes Pelton, have been celebrated for these factors in their abstract works, the work of men from the same period are discussed in terms of physicality or the actions of their art production, their expertise in making art, and their experimentation.

Those who have followed Dambrova’s career during the past decade or longer recognize his use of vibrant and intense colors, layers of art historical references which defy the labeling of his works within any specific genre, works with symbolic masks, organic tendrils, binding tentacles, and body organs, appropriation from our material world, and elements which have been described as “witty and whimsical”. However, Bill provides viewers with various portals of entry for viewing and understanding his work by infusing his ongoing ideas about “physical healing, spiritual growth, animism, and stillness” into his paintings and drawings.

In Dambrova’s VISITATIONS series from 2020 and 2021, we see sophisticated and mature work which builds upon paintings he produced during the past decade. However, the most significant work in the exhibition is his most recent painting Bog Mummy Take the Wheel (after Coronel). (Mexican 20th Century abstract artist Pedro Coronel. His brother Rafael was also an artist). Bill describes his intention and process towards this painting in a recent Facebook post:

“My intent with this painting was to riff on one\* of Coronel’s paintings and deconstruct it to be unrecognizable during the painting process, and what ended up happening was that the underpainting was so beautiful to me I simply stopped after 2 hours of painting super-fast and put it away to work on later. When I came back to it, I felt that I couldn’t add another mark to it or it would disrupt the feeling of spontaneity that it had, so I decided to call it finished. I added the human skull and the ceramic owl as an entry way for the viewer to get a sense for what I am feeling about, what I think is going on in the painting.”

\* Pedro Coronel, Untitled, 1980, Oil on canvas, 31.5 x 27.5 inches.

This painting marks a “qualifying life event” for Dambrova. It signals a new approach to making his work. He has simplified his process to include essential elements like a bold background with organic forms hovering above it. While they are interconnected, they do not have the vine-like tendrils wrapping around them as if to keep the composition from

collapsing. They have been stripped away. The various tones of color applied to the organic shapes to create light and form are reminiscent of Modernist and early Abstract Expressionist artists, such as Arshile Gorky and Lee Krasner. It also strays outside of the realm of painting in that it is sculptural due to its resting upon a red owl and red skull which lift it from the floor. Stay tuned for how this new process and style manifest themselves in future works.

Bill Dambrova is a native of Phoenix and attended Arizona State University where he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Studio Art. His passion for art, artifacts, and biology lead to a career as an exhibition designer specializing in natural history museums, zoos, and aquariums. His art has been acquired by various public institutions and private collectors. Dambrova has recently ventured into the Public Art realm with designs for light rail stations, most notably a brightly colored, 6,000 square foot terrazzo floor based on his paintings at a newly constructed Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport Sky Train station. In 2014 he was awarded the prestigious Artist Materials Grant from the Contemporary Forum at the Phoenix Art Museum. His work will be featured in a solo exhibition in 2023 at Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum, Mesa, Arizona.

Ted G. Decker  
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