

WILLIAM C. MAXWELL

Paintings, Drawings, Photographs and Prints

Artist Statement

I am interested in *moments of slippage*, where all is possible and nothing makes sense.

Moments of slippage, where meaning becomes nonsense and nonsense becomes knowing. Language has as its passion definitions. Art making possesses the incommensurability of passion itself.

My work is a process of agnostic knowing. I seek through the full act of painting, photographing and printmaking, from the inventing of concept to the experience of seeing the finished work, to know how and why art functions. I do not want to know the work's *meaning*. Abstraction, not as an end in itself, serves this purpose by providing a way to extract and compose sensations rather than meanings. Abstraction allows me to passionately embrace interpretation. Not the interpretation of meaning, but an inspection of the interpretative act itself.

Do we know? We never know! We only *feel* we know. My work, conceived as *total process*, deals with these moments of slippage.

The desire to know, and sensing some kind of knowing fosters the perpetuation of that desire. This passion to know perpetually intrudes and continues. The feeling that I possess some knowledge forces me to know more, to be *complete* in that knowing. This is an ultimate need for completeness, achieving *perfection*, even in the face of understanding that there exists only incompleteness, imperfection. The only "realization" of an ideal perfection, as an end in itself, is the knowledge of reality's imperfection.

Moments of slippage are our most passionate moments. These are sought in the "act." This is what I seek when choosing to make and see art. I seek to *possess* the work completely. It is the constant feeling of incompleteness that motivates this desire for completeness. For me, the act of art making is a momentary fulfillment of that desire for complete perfection while participating in the actuality of imperfection.

Being motivated by such a desire becomes its own passion. To make art passionately creates the moment when the act invades me, to a point of oblivion, where will and intent do not exist anymore. The process itself has invaded me where it alone directs my movements, my choices, my decisions, my labor. The act alone directs the work.

The work of art as product should reveal this struggle between perfection and imperfection. This is the authority of an artwork, of a artwork's *beauty*. To force a gaze, to force the experience of seeing not what it means, but what you, the spectator already know; it allows you to possess that knowledge by way of revelation.

My paintings, drawings, photographs and prints reveal a search for that knowing, for the already "known." They take as their inspiration abstract ideas and concepts developed out of language (the existing *doxa*) and serve as homage's to those ideas and concepts. The search, the odyssey, the quest, this adventure into and out of abstraction allows me to feel like I am possessing knowledge, that I have finally possessed that which I already know. In this way, my work is *self-revealing*.

This is "seeing" in its fullest sense. You see what you know, I see what I know, and we both become possessors of the artwork.

This seeing, incomplete as it is, creates the desire to see more, to "know" completeness. The seeking, mine by way of making the work, yours by way of gazing upon the work, is motivated by a similar desire for perfection. This is: *a desire to see complete beauty in all its authority.*

This goal, at once doomed, is yet so inviting. The process of making art is truly seductive, *where all is possible and nothing makes sense.* Thus, moments of slippage are times offered as potentials for affirming life. Moments of slippage are active, never reactive. They stimulate the will to form, as *recurrent affirmation.* The metaphorical form in my works of art appears as visual aphorisms, a terse display meant to move the viewer beyond a fixed idea (beyond the existing *Doxa*) and impel one to ask why we desire unchanging truths, a complete beauty, even when we recognize Truth as an illusion. When we ultimately realize there is no final meaning, meaning can always be transformed.

Accepting this avoids *belief* and tells us we are not in control. We want to control, and by putting form to chaos, we feel we are more in control, we are *controlling.* All we have done is to control that moment while all other moments elude us. This kind of knowing is derived, through the invention of concepts and a creating of schema of *discovery by way of artistic instinct.*

This knowing, as I have conceived of it, is an attempt to *know myself*, to break from my identity, from all identity by returning the "world" to chaos, to its original uncontrolled character, only to control momentarily once more. To paint, to draw, to photograph, to make prints, to create abstractly, to *know abstractly* is to enter these moments of slippage with vigor, *where all is possible and nothing makes sense.*

William C. Maxwell  
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