

For immediate release

May 14, 2008

*Cosmological Embeddedness OR The Flying Spaghetti Monster*

May 29 – July 3, 2008

Opening: Thursday, May 29, 6 - 8 pm

In a spirit counter to postmodern pluralism, this multi-artist and themed exhibition presents works that situate humans within the larger biophysical reality of the cosmos – or the Real. By taking a position of absolutes, namely cosmological embeddedness and the influence of nature on human life and society, this exhibit goes against the relativist grain.

The stimulus for this exploration of the Real came about as a response to a world in which the absurd reigns. Specifically, the way in which the Christian right, appropriating postmodern sensibilities, has thrust Intelligent Design into the public eye by challenging Darwinian evolution as simply "another theory." Currently, Christian fundamentalists are in court demanding that Intelligent Design be taught alongside science in schools across the United States as well as parts of Europe.

Using the absurd to challenge the absurd, *The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster* came about as a humorous but effective critique of Intelligent Design – if schools can teach Intelligent Design then they must also teach about the creative powers of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. The Church of the FSM's message – all theories on the origins and development of life are not equal. Our message – In art, 'aboutness' exists in a hierarchy not a vacuum.

For more information go to:

But Is There Intelligent Spaghetti Out There? By Sarah Boxer

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/29/arts/design/29mons.html>

The Dangers of Creationism In Education

<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc07/EDOC11375.htm>

Evolution's Critics Shift Tactics With Schools

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120967537476060561.html>

Welcome to the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster

<http://www.venganza.org/>

Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems – Galileo

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialogue\\_Concerning\\_the\\_Two\\_Chief\\_World\\_Systems](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialogue_Concerning_the_Two_Chief_World_Systems)

Moby wearing a Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster t-shirt

<http://www.venganza.org/2008/04/07/moby.htm>

## Q and A between Higher Pictures and Charlene Spretnak

May 10, 2008

HP: Your book *The Resurgence of the Real: Body, Nature, and Place in a Hypermodern World* was named one of the “Best Books of the Year” by the *Los Angeles Times* when it was published, in 1997. What do you mean by “the Real”?

CS: The West suffers from what Whitehead called the error of “misplaced concreteness”: we give far more weight to our conceptualizations, in both science and culture, than to apprehending the full, complex existence of reality. Consequently, our culturally derived concepts seem to us to be wholly compelling, while the natural world seems merely an inconsequential backdrop. This problem, I would add, has been greatly intensified by the ideologies of modernity.

The focus of the book is that the actual (dynamic, non-mechanistic) nature of the Real is currently poking holes through various overarching assumptions of modernity that have held sway as our dominant concepts for some 350 years. All of our modern systems of knowledge were based on the mechanistic worldview. What a concept! It yielded certain kinds of useful information and knowledge but completely missed the dynamic, creative interrelated nature of reality. By “the Real” I mean our physicality – our bodies and our larger context, the subtle processes of the Earth and the cosmos. Although it is difficult for us to grasp because of our modern socialization, our embodiment is what it is because of myriad subtle relationships. We are embedded in the universe because we are kin to everything in it, for we are all – the grass, the galaxies, our bodies – descended from the “Big Bang,” the emergence of the cosmos. Moreover, everything in the universe is held in a gravitational embrace. As for the ecological dynamics on our home planet, they are cosmological dynamics of a certain scale and place.

HP: How does deconstructive postmodernism, or poststructuralism, fit in? You are decidedly underwhelmed by it.

CS: Truly. A central belief of modernity is that an advanced society lives largely on top of nature, as if in a glass box, utterly fixated on human projects. Deconstructive postmodernism took the glass box down to even tighter dimensions: the reduction of all human projects to language games, arbitrarily invented and hence drained of all meaning. In my view, the crises of modernity require that we *open up* the glass box and reconnect with our grounding, the ecological and cosmological matrix of our being.

HP: How does this relate to art? Over the past thirty years, art has often engaged with social and cultural issues, but far less with nature, including the biological dimensions of the human. Do you think that will change in the next thirty years as we quantify the terms of our biophysical reality?

CS: The art world is subject to the same *zeitgeist* and acculturation as the rest of society – which is why many of the younger artists, raised in electronic saturation and educated in the worldview of postmodernism, tend to make works depicting “cool” surface arrangements of discordant forms or other expressions of disengagement. Yet it is through the creativity of artists that we sometimes experience a jarring of our consciousness beyond our habitual ways of thinking. I don't mean jarred by a banal “strike against context” or some other mode of visual acting out. I mean the arresting quality of a significant work of art, especially at the first moments of encounter and, to a lesser extent, at every subsequent viewing as well.

Our hypermodern society cannot seem to move beyond our comfortable ways of thinking and knowing, so we apparently cannot take in what is actually happening to the Real. *The polar ice caps are melting*, but not many of our visual and literary artists engage with what is happening to the Earth and to us. I do not feel that any programmatic subject should be imposed on art. Still, societies are either culturally engaged with the natural world – or they labor in pathological denial of that embeddedness. To survive, industrialized societies urgently need to transform themselves from denial to engagement. I doubt that we can achieve that deep shift without the participation of art.

For more about *The Resurgence of the Real: Body, Nature, and Place in a Hypermodern World*, see [www.CharleneSpretnak.com](http://www.CharleneSpretnak.com).