

From stillness into nothingness

I first discovered nothingness while I was painting my Lake George series. The challenge in creating the work was how to create a sense of stillness, something like a meditation, which you dropped and expanded into.

Nothingness is a bit like sleep. You enter what you think is a great void of black, but one that is enriched by those restless hours full of imaginings that come from deep within your subconscious. Nothingness transformed into another layer of dream reality.

In a spiritual context you only need to turn to Buddhism where 'emptiness' rather than 'nothingness' is considered a state of mind. You empty your mind to create a stillness which connects you to a bigger reality.

Not all material things are concrete – shadows and holes have locations but are not made of anything.¹ The simple beauty and scale of some of Anish Kapoor's sculptures evokes the mystery of dark cavities. Nothingness Theory itself says that space is infinite, so there can be no limit in size and ultimately no constituents.²

Sartre talked about the fundamental freedom of the human being against other forces and nothingness as intervening between the forces that act upon us.³

For me as an artist, nothingness comes back to a state of creation which draws from some potent inner spirit. In the process of mark making I move into a meditative state where I expand into space and attempt to disconnect from thought. In this process the work tends to create itself.

Through my art I explore the creative potential of the spirit and connect to it through a process of mindfulness in the mark making itself. As Earle Coleman said "... aesthetic ideas can serve as bridges to spiritual categories ..." relating aesthetic bliss to "... the peace that passes all understanding."⁴

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¹ 'Nothingness', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006.

² Corey D. Kaup, "Nothingness Theory. The connection between the evolution of the universe and human thought", Kaup Communications, 1989 – 2007.

³ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology", 1943.

⁴ Earle Jerome Coleman, "Creativity and Spirituality: Bonds Between Art and Religion", SUNY Press, 1998