

ART AND RELIGION

A Lecture/Discussion Program

Wednesday evening, February 23, 2011,
7:00 TO 9:00 PM

HILLEL at UCLA: 574 Hilgard Avenue
with Art Exhibit of works by Junko Chodos:
Concerning Art and Religion the complete series,
and selections from Requiem for an Executed Bird

HOSTED BY

The Dortort Center for



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AND



Introduction

Ra'anana Boustan • Director of UCLA Center For the Study of Religion

Moderator

Rafael Chodos • President, Foundation for Centripetal Art • Author • Lawyer

20-Minute Papers, each followed by a question-and-answer period:

The Second Commandment and Idolatry

Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller • Director, UCLA Hillel

Literary Art as Religious Revelation

Jack Miles • Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author of *God: A Biography*

Image and Revelation in the 21st Century

Junko Chodos • Artist

Refreshments will be served. Admission Free.

Parking is available for \$10 at UCLA lot #2 on the corner of Westholme and Hilgard.

No parking on Strathmore Drive or 600 block of Westholme.

RSVP by phone 310/208-3081x108, or online at www.uclahillel.org/artreligion

The search for “ultimate truth and meaning” is often considered to be the essential business of religion. But might not art also provide an avenue for this same pursuit? Indeed, inspiration and revelation, however conceived, are often said to play an equally essential role for the artist as for the religious visionary. Is art then an alternative to religion? Can art serve as a basis for creating a sense of community and shared purpose without relying on religion? Or are art and religion in fact complementary and even overlapping forces in shaping human life?

Living as we do in a post-Enlightenment age, when the authority of traditional religious texts and practices has been undermined in many quarters by radical doubt but the search for sources of enlightening inspiration remains undiminished, we take this opportunity to explore the complex relationship between art and religion in our contemporary world.

Rafael Chodos practices law and is the President of GiottoMultimedia. He is the author of many essays and articles on law, technology, and religion, and of *The Law of Fiduciary Duties* (2000), *The Jewish Attitude Towards Justice and Law* (1984), *Centripetal Art: Matrix of Growth* (eBook 2008), and *Why on Earth Does God Have to Paint? / Centripetal Art* (2009) co-authored with his wife, the artist, Junko Chodos. In 2008, Rafael and Junko formed The Foundation for Centripetal Art.

Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller is in his 36th year at UCLA Hillel as director. He was ordained in 1971 at Yeshiva University where he also earned a Masters Degree in Rabbinic Literature. He has taught Kabbalah and Talmud at the University of Judaism (AJU), and has lectured in the Departments of Near Eastern Languages and Culture, and Sociology, at UCLA. He is currently teaching at Loyola Marymount University and is a member of the faculty of the Shalom Hartman Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies in Jerusalem and of the Wexner Heritage Foundation.

Jack Miles is Distinguished Professor of English and Religious Studies with the University of California at Irvine and Senior Fellow for Religious Affairs with the Pacific Council on International Policy. He is a writer whose work has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and many other publications. His book *GOD: A Biography* won a Pulitzer Prize in 1996. His book *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God* led to his being named a MacArthur Fellow for the years 2003-2007. He is currently at work as general editor of the forthcoming *Norton Anthology of World Religions*.

Junko Chodos was born and raised in Japan during WWII. She began creating art in hand-dug trenches where she and her family hid from the Allied bombings. This severe experience, as well as her early religious experiences, led her to form the concept of Centripetal Art and she has lectured often on that concept. She has exhibited in one-person shows in galleries and museums in the United States, Japan and Europe. The first work in her current series, *Mass Killing*—visual lamentations on genocide throughout the world and through history—recently became part of the permanent collection of the Central European University in Budapest. She is a Fellow of the Society for Art, Religion and Contemporary Culture.

An initiative of THE FOUNDATION FOR CENTRIPETAL ART
*Part of the Foundation's mission is to promote serious discussion
of contemporary art in relation with other vital issues.*
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JUNKO CHODOS THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND RELIGION

Dortort Gallery / UCLA Hillel • Through March 13, 2011

CONCERNING ART AND RELIGION

(A series of nine works, 2003, 2004)

Acrylic and collage on mylar / Each panel: 84" x 42"

WORK 1 Why do demons and angels both fly in the sky?

WORK 2 Why do you love chaos and destruction so much?

WORK 3 Is the Nike of Samothrace more beautiful than a broken engine?

WORK 4 Isn't art a desperate attempt to embrace the inorganic and bring it to the organic?

WORK 5 Why do you show such an image to me?

WORK 6 Man receives and what he receives is not a "content" but a presence as strength - Buber.

WORK 7 In the beginning is the image

WORK 8 Embrace me in the moment of eternity!

WORK 9 Who will shatter the illusions? the prophet? the artist?



VIEWER, You are invited to dive into this whirling vortex of fragmented images, religious ideas and questions about the nature of beauty that can have no precise answers. Visual language intersects here with verbal language: pages from the writings of Martin Buber, Erich Fromm, and Hans Sedlmayr are incorporated into the complicated, energetic collages of images of broken engine parts, birds' wings, and burls. We cannot tell whether the inscriptions or the images came first: they came together.

The first four works pose general and philosophical questions. The fifth work is the artist's response to a vision she saw hanging in the sky above her head. The sixth work proclaims an insight about man's encounter with the divine. The seventh work affirms the role of art as a primary means of forming consciousness. The eighth work invites the viewer to participate with the artist in the embrace of the vibrant energy at the center of the work. And the ninth work - the tryptych - reflects on the entire series and suggests a new role for the artist: the role of constructive outsider, like the ancient prophets, whose mission is to shatter our illusions.

These works are intended to provoke serious questions in your mind. Questioning as part of truth-seeking is one aspect of the intersection of art and religion.

For more information, see the websites CentripetalArt.com and JunkoChodos.com

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THE PERSONAL TRAUMA. When Junko was a child in Japan during World War II, her family sent her to her uncle's hospital in the countryside to keep her safe from the allied bombings. One day, wandering through the empty wards, she came upon a hen which had been slaughtered. Its head had been chopped off, and its blood was dripping into a bucket which had been carefully placed on the *tatami* below. The scene traumatized her: it encapsulated all the horrors of the war—the ever-present death and destruction, and the rampant fascism of the Japanese government itself. The Bird wanted to fly and be free and for that it had been slaughtered. For fifty years, Junko could not even look at a bird.

RESOLUTION. In 1991, over a period of two months, locked in her studio, Junko painted 45 images of the slaughtered Bird. Each image led her to the next one: she followed the images just as the Israelites followed the pillars of fire and cloud. In the middle of the series, she realized that she was painting a requiem for the executed Bird. She saw the Bird against a background of stained glass (No. 22) and was able to utter the words, "the bird is dying...the bird is dying" (No. 24). Having engaged the trauma, she found it was resolved.

REQUIEM FOR AN EXECUTED BIRD

(1991) Mixed media on paper 40" x 32"

A selection of six works from the full series of forty-five:

Nos. 4 and 6 — PERSONAL TRAUMA:

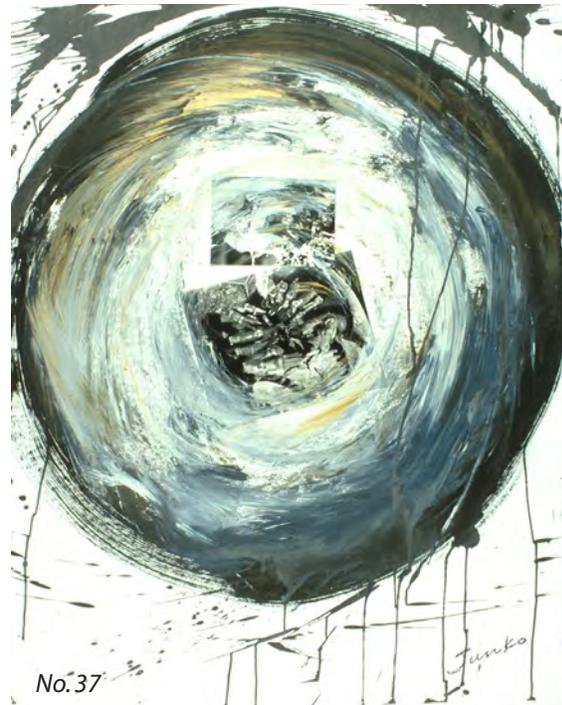
the early works recall the dark event.

Nos 22 and 24 — RESOLUTION:

the darkness is resolved and the experience moves towards something universal.

Nos. 37 and 42 — TRANSCENDENCE:

the darkness is transformed into light.



TRANSCENDENCE. The Bird then appeared to her as floating in circles of air. Instead of the bloody red which she had remembered in the original scene, she shows us now feathers of gold in the airy space where the slaughtered Bird now flies.

Through painting this series of works, both the Bird and the Artist were reborn. And by participating in the series, the viewer too can be reborn.

The process of grappling with darkness, resolving it and transcending it so that the most personal thing becomes the most universal, is another aspect of the intersection of art and religion.

The Dortort Center for Creativity in
the Arts at UCLA Hillel

presents

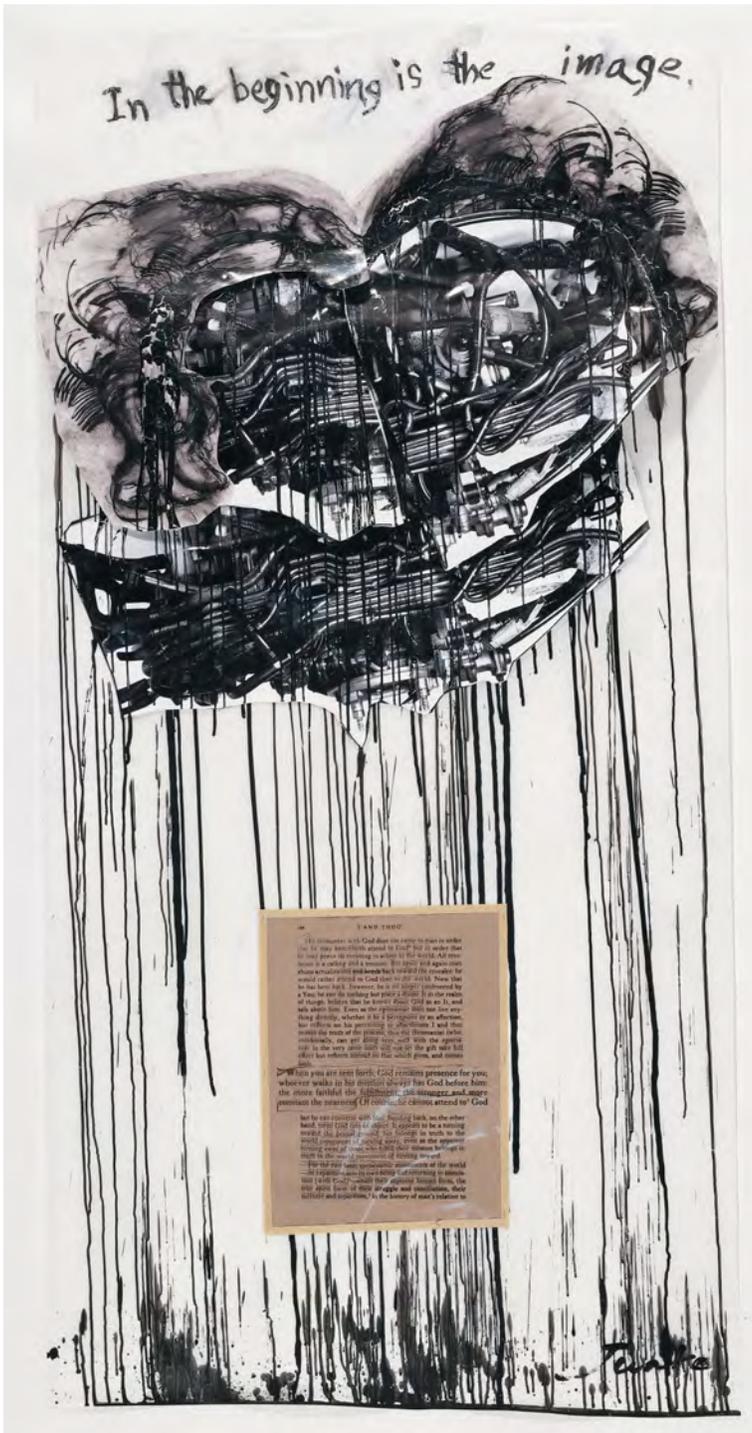
JUNKO CHODOS: THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND RELIGION

Exhibit and Symposium

January 13 - March 13, 2011

Gallery Hours: Mon- Fri 10 am - 4 pm

Junko Chodos was born and raised in Japan during WWII. Her severe childhood experiences of death and destruction as well as her early mystical experiences give her art a special quality. She holds a B.A. in the Philosophy of Art and Art History from Waseda University. Her art is in the permanent collections of several museums in the US and Europe. She has shown in solo exhibitions, and given lectures in museums, galleries and universities internationally. She defines the art she creates as “Centripetal Art:” art that strives towards the artist’s center to encounter divine presence there -- in a place beyond all the bonds and fetters of religions, ethnicity, race, gender, blood and soil.



Concerning Art and Religion, No. 7 • In the Beginning is the Image • BY JUNKO CHODOS (2003) • Paper, acetate and acrylic on mylar • 84”X42”

From standing in the intersection between art and religion and between literal language and visual language; from asking existential questions about the pulverizing destructive forces and madness in the world; the nine works of my series, *Concerning Art and Religion*, were born. Looking up at the visions unfolding above my head, I was stirred by the severity of the world and by the responsibility we all bear. JUNKO CHODOS