



Richard L. Dana
Here and Where
March 26 – May 27, 2019
Kaplan Gallery, VisArts

Richard Dana, *Metablooms*, digital inkjet pigment print on transparency on lightbox, 28 x 24 inches

IN THIS PLACE. AT WHAT PLACE?

“Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never complete; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten.” – Marc Augé, *Non-Places*

“When left alone, quantum particles behave as multiple images of themselves (as waves, really), simultaneously moving through all possible paths in space and time.” – Christophe Galfard, *The Universe in Your Hand: A Journey Through Space, Time and Beyond*

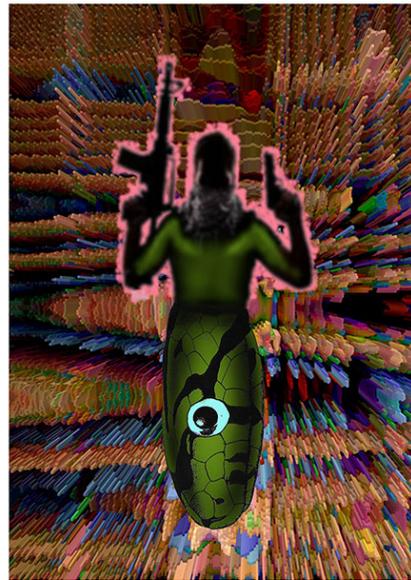
“Abstraction allows man to see with his mind what he cannot see physically with his eyes.... Abstract art enables the artist to perceive beyond the tangible, to extract the infinite out of the finite. It is the emancipation of the mind. It is an exploration into unknown areas.” – Arshile Gorky

Richard Dana presents an optically explosive and complex universe in his solo exhibition *Here and Where* in the Kaplan Gallery at VisArts, March 27 – May 26, 2019. Combining abstraction and representation with macro and micro shifts of scale and brilliant color, he stretches, warps, pinches, twirls, massages, implodes, explodes, repeats, and extrudes digital information creating images that hint at infinitely unfolding mental, emotional, and spatial states. Printed on canvas or photographic paper mounted on sintra, adhered directly to wall, illuminated in lightboxes, or blended into a shape-shifting, glinting lenticular print, the works are as bright and saturated with color as backlit images on a screen. Arranged

tightly on the walls in configurations that Dana refers to as “visual sentences,” the singularly compelling and collectively dazzling works expand and contract like open windows on a computer screen. The eye zooms in, pulls away, and reorients. The mind follows, constructing shifting narratives around Dana’s simultaneously defined and uncertain terrains.

Stacks of geometric blocks of color explode from deep space. Volumes transform from sharp to soft, compress into twisting wave-like patterns, float or hover on the surface before collapsing inward or outward. Forms emerge and fade, break into bits and build again with the same elements. Place is no place, someplace, and everyplace all at once.

Duality permeates the exhibition. Images are singular and multiple, individual and collective, dark and light, close and far. In *Hanuman*, the Hindu god of generosity and purity replicates with a lantern for a head and snake-heads as pedestals. It is paired with *The Gunman* where a singular silhouetted figure holding a semi-automatic weapon melds with the head of a snake. In various mythologies the snake symbolizes the dual expressions of good and evil. The enlightened god and the menacing gunman are pushed forward by the same explosive spectrum of colors and shapes. The backgrounds in the two prints differ only in the direction of the pattern’s force. *Hanuman* appears to emanate from a single point while the singular *The Gunman* is born from multiple points.



Hanuman (left) and *The Gunman* (right), archival digital inkjet pigment prints on adhesive fabric, overall dimensions 62 x 102 inches

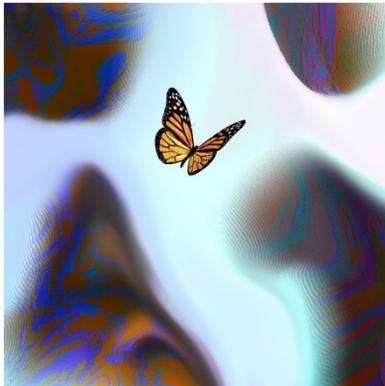


(above) *Archetype*, digital inkjet pigment print on canvas, 24 x 24 inches

Of the 65 works presented, most are non-representational abstractions, however there are a few tantalizing moments where recognizable iconic imagery merges with or bursts from ambiguous environments hinting at hidden narratives. An iconic American silhouette of a cowboy on a horse wavers out of focus surrounded by a glowing aura against a patterned backdrop that is roiling with change and uneasy energy. In another print, an elephant—symbol of a political party, circus animal, or threatened species—balances on a ball in outer or perhaps inner space on the verge of being overtaken by a gaping dark background and covered by a multi-colored energy field.

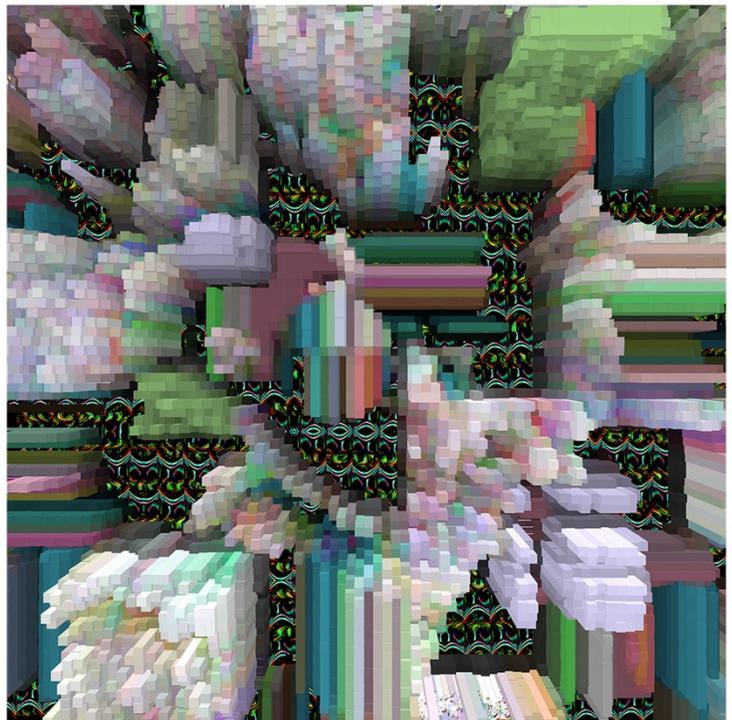
In the center of Dana's visual sentence *Passage*, a butterfly appears in a liminal space that might be empty sky or screen. The prints on either side of it grow in scale and resemble

birds' eye views of rampant, escalating development. The butterfly is in an uneasy relationship with an environment in flux. Is it the flap of its wings that causes the events to the left and right? Or is this picture the only remainder of an actual living pollinator in a built environment of unchecked growth?



(left) *Unobserved Phenomenon*, digital inkjet pigment print on canvas, 16 x 16 inches

(right) *Above Urbania*, digital inkjet pigment print on canvas, 66 x 58 inches



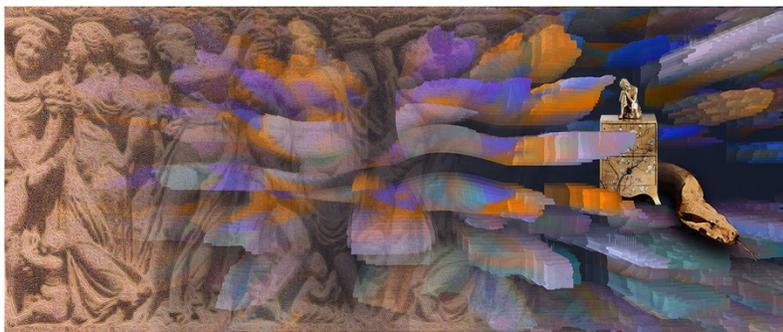


Richard Dana, *Here and Where*, installation of *Passage* at VisArts.

Left to right: *Uncharted* (66 x 58 inches), *Particulate Re-deconvergence* (40 x 54 inches), *Unobserved Phenomenon* (16 x 16 inches), *In Limbo* (40 x 54 inches), *Above Urbania* (66 x 58 inches). All works printed on photographic paper mounted on sintra.



Repeating patterns within configurations unite visual elements and tie individual pieces to evolving ideas. Ribbon-like waves move through each image in the “visual sentence” titled *The Mortal Coil*. Reading left to right the images begin with what might be a moment before an asteroid collision (*Over There*) moving through the development of civilization, art, worldly goods and cultural symbols in *Beyond the Mortal Coil*, passing through two other transitional states, and ending with a tangled, roiling mass in *Suburban Ecosystem In Flux*. Nothing in the fundamental make up of matter and space is lost. It just assumes a different state.



(left of text) *Over There*, digital inkjet pigment print on canvas, 30 x 32 inches

(left) *Beyond the Mortal Coil*, digital inkjet pigment print on canvas, 30 x 72 inches

(right) *Suburban Ecosystem In Flux*, digital inkjet pigment print on canvas, 24 x 24 inches

Dana's eye and mind-bending works pulse with an atomic-like connectivity. Place and space are defined **and** indeterminate. Opposing forces of explosion and compression, representation and abstraction yield patterns and volumes that suggest an elemental substrate that runs beneath appearances, arranging all that is perceived. In response to the 21st century's heap of images, Dana digs into the substance of visual experience, examining where the eye might linger and entangle with the mind. He considers how shapes, colors, pixels, values sometimes coalesce into recognizable objects as well as unnamable, uncertain forms of potential. Within our personal mental space and cultural orientations, place, history, imagination, memory, and identity converge to form "in-progress" points of view. A cultural icon is re-defined within the context of another era. An explosion levels one place from which sprouts another. *Here and Where* sends viewers on a space and time warping visual journey that stimulates multi-layered narratives and challenges firm ground.

-Susan Main
Gallery Director and Curator
VisArts
2019

About the artist: Richard L. Dana is a self-taught artist who works in a wide variety of media, including painting, drawing, collage, installation as well as computer-generated digital work. He has exhibited extensively in the United States and internationally in 32 one or two-person exhibitions and over 140 group exhibitions.

Mr. Dana has exhibited his work widely in the United States including in Washington, D.C., New York, Chicago, Miami, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Internationally Mr. Dana has exhibited in museums, galleries, and biennials in the following countries: Belgium, Brazil, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Morocco, Russia, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

Mr. Dana has also been very involved in arts administration through the years. He is a co-founder and project director for the international artists' collective the *Take Me To The River Project*. Mr. Dana has served as President of the Board of Directors of the following arts organizations: The Arlington Arts Center: Creativity 21st Century; and Touchstone Gallery. He was the founder and Executive Director of the Washington Area Arts Consortium and Cofounder/Director of *The Art of Work, The Work of Art* project. He was one of the co-founders and co-directors of *Art-o-Matic*. He has served on the Board of Directors of Pyramid Atlantic, the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, Art on The Block and the Central Asian Cultural Exchange.

Mr. Dana has also worked as an independent curator, having staged exhibitions at, among other venues: The World Bank (three separate exhibitions); the National Museum of Women in the Arts; The Sumner School Museum (Washington, D.C.); the Art Center/South Florida (Miami); the Virginia Beach Center for the Arts; and the Arlington Arts Center.

Mr. Dana received a B.A. in Russian Studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1975 and an M.A. in International Relations from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (Washington, D.C.) in 1977. From 1977 to 1988 he worked as an economist and Soviet Affairs expert in Washington, D.C.