

# RESONANT JOURNEYS

## Journeys Revealed: A Visual Record of Discovery

*Judith Perry*

Art at its highest level shows us who we are and who we might be. Courage leads the way: it takes courage to explore the geography of our own experience, to understand how it has shaped us and then be willing to reveal it to others. Sarah Bowen and Brian Dickerson have individually built their lives around a committed studio practice and a strong sense that their visual artwork is a form of inquiry. Their work is fostered by their engaged teaching practice and by a meaningful and supportive dialogue with each other that spans more than a dozen years. As an artist myself and a friend to both artists, I am thrilled to be involved in this ongoing conversation about how we move and direct our lives as creative people.

What resonates in the journeys of these two artists goes beyond shared interests and the formal qualities of their work. This traveling exhibition gives us an opportunity to look at the work of two individuals who have made very conscious choices about the kind of artistic lives they would pursue. It is the integrity behind the cumulative decisions to grow as artists that has created such authentic visual expressions.

Sarah Bowen leads a contemplative life in northern Vermont, and her luminous, intimate paintings represent a search for inner wholeness and integration. Brian Dickerson, who lives in Philadelphia and upstate New York, explores remembered landscapes in his iconic three-dimensional paintings on wood. Both artists explore the themes of life, death, and renewal. Both use subtle forms in their work and have a complex layering process involving the use of deep color harmonies that express the depth of our human experience.

Remarkably, what we are witnessing in the work of these two artists is a visual record of ongoing transformation. There is a sense of emergence and integration as Bowen's and Dickerson's visual landscapes evolve and change.

Their dialogue with each other supports and clarifies this transformation.

In Bowen's paintings, the images of planets rise and overlap; the circle form becomes a rich and clarifying symbol for the self, and celebrates the potential that we all share for change and growth. Coming from a deep understanding of the ancient traditions of spiritual art, her work reveals a very personal experience of transformation through the subtlety and quiet depth of its imagery.

The heavily layered and reworked surfaces in Dickerson's painted wood constructions reveal a deeply felt process of exploration. We see Dickerson's imagery moving from visual references of the Helderberg Mountain landscape of his childhood toward a more inward, subjective expression of the world. Each work contains hidden forms and apertures suggesting almost inaccessible mystery. Seen as objects, these paintings redefine our notions of sacred space and provide an opportunity for contemplation.

Artists help us make sense of our world. In an ever changing and unsettled world, it is especially helpful to see how we might integrate our experiences and choose to live our lives. These paintings are at once about mystery and discovery, yet to discover their qualities will demand time and attention from the viewer. Sarah Bowen and Brian Dickerson have undertaken journeys which make the unseen visible, the unknown known. Their visual imagery shows us how an inner life can ultimately connect us to the whole world.