

Art of Zen

Barbara Rose

Published by Art of Synthesis

www.artofsynthesis.com

Copyright ©Barbara Rose 2011. All rights reserved

Artwork and design by Barbara Rose

www.visionsofreality.co.uk

Galactic content: NASA/courtesy nasaimages.org

Journey

The commission was to create a piece of art, simple in nature, embodying the principles of Zen whilst also being very fluid to fit in with a 'spa' environment. This, to my mind, evoked images of traditional Zen – one or more stones, positioned vertically, amongst a carefully sculptured 'sandscape,' or a droplet of water frozen in time moments before it engages with the ocean. Added to these scenarios were impressions of where the final piece of art was to be 'hung.'

I gathered the images I thought would produce the desired effect, and started to play. I gave up; it just didn't seem to be working. I waited a week or so and started again using different source images – again I gave up - it still wasn't coming together. A couple of weeks later I tried again, and was about to give up AGAIN, but this time I stopped.



I tuned into the energy and allowed myself to 'be' with what was there. My 'idea' of Zen and my 'idea' of the environment together with my perceptions of how it would be received were getting in the way. Instead of just allowing what needed to be expressed, BE expressed, I was trying to make it fit MY ideas. In other words I was getting in the way of Spirit manifesting through me.

I started again. Ironically, I began with the same images I had used previously – this time with renewed intention. I played with waterfalls, giant waves, a tree trunk with a giant hole in the middle, sunlight rippling across wet sand, and even a giant hosta. All of these magical ingredients were blended with the timeless wisdom of the cosmos, including my favourite little planet, Pluto – thank you NASA!

Before long I had two images to reflect upon – the first was very un-Zen in the traditional sense. And yet, was it? The practise of Zen, be it through meditation or art form, is to induce a tranquil state of mind, yet we live in a world that is quite chaotic with minds that are far from still. It seems to me that everyday life in the 21st century is somewhat denied through these traditional art forms. Surely the 'Art of Zen' must embrace BOTH everyday life AND stillness? The second image, as discussed below, I felt fitted the Zen 'remit' better – well, almost!

Contemplation

Now let's take a look at the first image (enlarged on p7). It has a subtle watery feel about it, defined by the underlying wave-like quality and the water bubbles leading you into the picture from the lower left. I feel I am at the bottom of the ocean – in *Davy Jones' locker* maybe? – If I look beyond the flotsam and jetsam floating about, and allow my gaze to alight upon the central darkness, **I find my mind becoming quiet and STILL**; my emotions calm and my physical body relaxes. Quite a 'Zen-like' state wouldn't you say? I am also intrigued by the light on the 'ocean bed' which leads me to another source of light in the upper right quadrant. The more I engage with this light source, the more I see it illuminates the whole picture in a very gentle, unobtrusive way. It shines in sufficient magnitude to illuminate the dark without obliterating it. **I feel strangely at peace**. The little planet appears apart, an observer. Yet it does belong. I feel this underwater scene would be incomplete without its presence, as would I without the one who watches.....



Let's move on to the second image (enlarged on p8). The component parts making up both these images are more or less the same, the only difference being in their blending properties. It therefore follows one is a reflection of the other; the light and the dark aspects. The watery effect is now more prominently reflected in the rays rippling out from the 'sun' at the upper right quadrant, as well as in the soft ripples of sand in the lower left. Pluto, the observer, has moved slightly and appears, to me, to be orbiting the 'sun.' The image itself fills me with light. I find it very uplifting in a radiatory way, inspiring me to shine and share this light with others. Pluto has become less of an observer and more obviously a part of the whole, as if another observer bears witness to great cosmic cycles unfolding within it; I find myself at once the whole and the part.

Understanding

Understanding the '*Art of Zen*,' as reflected within these two images, lies in the little planet Pluto. Astrologically Pluto rules the extremes of the emotional body, the light and the dark aspects of the personality. It presents a powerful opportunity to transform our base desires into the highest spiritual illumination; as in the pheonix rising from the ashes. In greek mythology Pluto was the god of the underworld, the ruler of Hades, and the lord of death. When we apply these understandings to our personal journeys of transformation we can see the highest spiritual illumination may only be attained through apparent death of the ego self.

Traditionmal zen art depicts water, without being water. The image on p3 shows a stone in the centre of ripples made of sand. If these ripples were made of water the stone would sink to the bottom. Reflect upon this. Do these traditional images, whilst instilling momentary tranquility, deny the existence of the emotional body, symbolised by water? Is the tranquillity generated from these images simply an illusion?

Returning to our two images and the '*Art of Zen*.' We can see all the Plutonian features within them; **together** they form the complete picture - the awakening journey from chaos to clarity. Nothing is denied or suppressed. Water is water, light is light, dark is dark, death is death and the totality brings clarity and yes, stillness; lasting stillness. Both images in unison reflect the awakening process beginning on the ocean floor in '*Davy Jones' locker*,' another term for death. However this is not a fearful place to be, as shown in my contemplation, it held me softly in it embrace and encouraged the light to emerge naturally; the second image appeared as if by magic, without my having to go anywhere or 'do' anything.

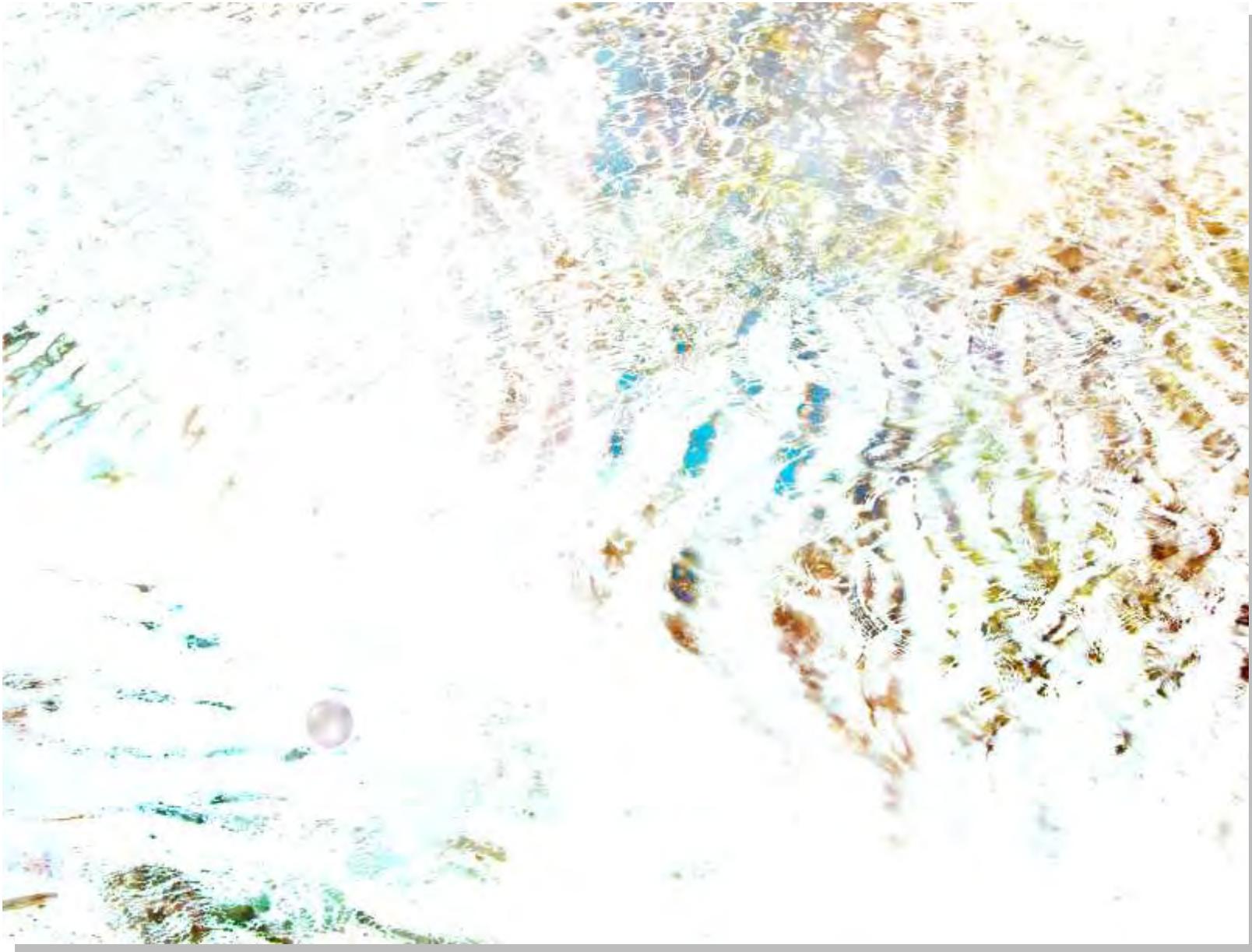
It is not the chaos we have in our lives that brings us down, it is how we flow with that chaos. If we are prepared to embrace '*Davy Jones' locker*,' to let go of all that would keep us small, then the light of our true nature cannot fail to be revealed.

This, to me, is Zen – the *Art of Zen*.

BE STILL.

listen to the whispers of the Soul.....







Manifest the beauty of your Soul... walk a rainbow through your life... 🌈