

NAMAN
Dream Altars, Vietnam
A Search for use of the Golden Mean and its Affect on
Design and Content

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Abstract

My recently completed installation "Dream Altar, Vietnam" deals with my memory of my experiences in Viet Nam. Since memory tends to be amorphous, I began to utilize the Golden Ratio as a means of imposing order on the project. I found that incorporating Golden Rectangles in the design enhanced the impact of the artwork. To further this enhancement, Dr. McConnell and I will experiment with other uses of the Golden Ratio in the actual arrangement of the installation, especially its relationship to the three dimensional space that it will be contained within.

I will install a Memory Altar at the Bridges Conference and discuss the discoveries we have made and how we used the golden section and other mathematics in the overall construction of the piece.



Memory Altar, Vietnam, by Jim Rose, exhibited at Clarion University Gallery 2005

Introduction

NAMAN is a compound of the words NAM and MAN. NAM is a slang word for Vietnam and MAN stands for man. . My goal is to create an installation called a "Dream Altar", that consists of photographic montages and objects that I acquired in Saigon. These thoughts and photographic montages, combined with objects I acquired in 1970, are accumulated and presented thirty-four years later, allowing me to explore how my memories have changed over time.

Dream Altars are a combination of objects, photographs, plants and projected slides. The goal is to share my thoughts and memories with the observer, since memories are a dream after the fact. The past is a limited database in one's mind that slowly dissolves with time giving glimpses of life, sometimes subliminal and sometimes conscious. This Dream Altar is a work in progress. The installation at Bridges will be a further step in seeing how the geometric structure of the golden rectangle affects the visual or emotional impact of the artwork.

Vietnam Memory Scrolls are a montage of my photographs of Vietnam. The format, which is like a Chinese scroll, symbolizes the admiration and agreement I have for art and culture of the orient. They also represent the first introduction of the golden ratio into this artwork. The dimensions of the photographs and the cloth portions of the scrolls are in Golden Rectangle proportion. After changing the dimensions to represent the Golden Ratio, I noticed this enhanced the visual impact of the scrolls. My next step is to find further ways to incorporate the Golden Ratio and see if this enhances the piece by adding geometric structure to unstructured memories. The harmony of the Golden Section may introduce peace into unharmonious memories of war.

Background Information The introduction of classical mathematics into my art started with my collaboration with Dr. Steve Gendler from Clarion University. We presented a Making Connections class called Art in Perspective, which showed the relationship between art and mathematics. Although I was aware of the Golden Ratio, until then I never really used or understood it.

Optimization. Working with my memories and random thoughts I use geometry to construct my images from random experimentation. What is the correct amount of structure? Optimization of impact is my goal using art and mathematics. I have used the golden section in some pieces of my art consciously and unconsciously. I will team up with Mike McConnell and study various ways I can use mathematics to help with not only the production of my scrolls but also the arrangement of all elements included in my installation. This will expand my understanding of the Golden Section and allow me to formalize the process using mathematics. We will then view our experiments and decide which composition works best according to our own personal experience, which includes some mathematical analysis.

Dr. McConnell will work with me to explore as many mathematical variants of these objects in three dimension and present our findings at Bridges.