



Interview with Domenico Zindato

• Alessandro Keegan •

Domenico Zindato, an Italian-born painter currently living in Cuernavaca, Mexico, creates works that dazzle the eye with intricately rendered detail and irradiated colors. On closer inspection the glowing surfaces of gauche, ink and pastel reveal human figures, animals, disembodied eyes and hands and occasionally hieroglyphic-looking writings. One senses a mystical vision lays at the source of Zindato's endless stream of miniature imagery, a vision that I have gathered hints of through conversations I have had with the artist over the years of knowing him.

In this interview I hoped to tease out a few clues to the sources of his inspiration and to gather some sense of the mind-set the artist enters into when working. In a few of his words presented here, and at other times when we have talked, I gathered that there are traces of influence in Zindato's work that stem from the artist's practice of Qigong, the traditional Chinese holistic practice of movement and meditation that emphasizes breathing, rhythm and the focusing of mind and body on the flow of Qi, or the life force that permeates all of nature. A number of other points of reference a scattered throughout our conversation here, including travel, music, tarot divination and literature.

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AK (Alessandro Keegan): Early in your life you studied law in Rome, lived in Berlin before the reunification, traveled through Europe, India and Morocco, and currently you live in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Over the years you've traveled a great deal to further places around the globe. Have the experiences of traveling and living throughout the world helped to shape your art? Do you see the experiences of travel finding their way into your work? Has there been one place, in all of your travels, that has effected you most deeply?

DZ (Domenico Zindato): I do certainly feel that, in my case, moving around this world and making art is deeply intertwined, mostly not because of any planning or intentions but as the movement of two legs that are making one step after the other. One leg is art, and it has stepped first at times, and the other leg is the "wanderlust" that stepped first, at some other moments. Both have been moving me through "lines of forces", but never obvious or predictable paths, always strongly connected to my inner energy, seeking grounds where I can thrive, like immaterial seeds in energetic fields. In retrospect, through hard and happier moments, I can't say what place has affected me most until now, since all has been lived with a great intensity. Though of course I do have plenty of illuminating peak moments that

happened in different places, ancient sites, natural environment, even modern-contemporary architecture, it is there that I return in my mind, at times.

AK: What is the place you go to most in your mind for inspiration?

DZ: It isn't just one place. When I first traveled to India it was an overwhelming influx of new and different experiences. Likewise, when I went to Haiti and Peru, or definitely when I first arrived and traveled through Mexico for my first six months here, the experience was impactful.

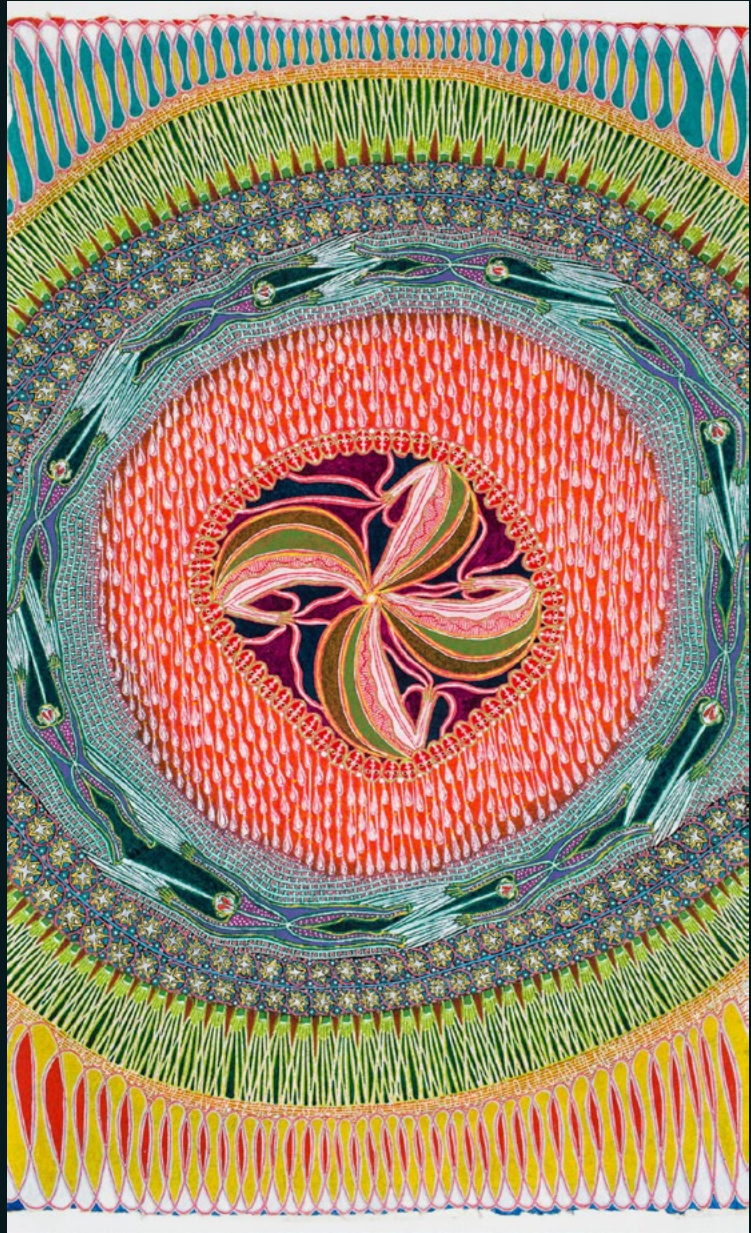
If there is one sort of special place that has effected me, which I have experienced only a couple of times in different countries, it is the hidden waterfalls that are found in dense jungles. These are the places that I respond to completely.

AK: Looking at your paintings I see rays, waves and swirls of energy that emanate from the body, hands and eyes. Sometimes there is the suggestion of energy emanating from plants and animals. This all makes me think of the invisible world around us in nature, light and magnetic fields and worlds beyond. Are you interested in this invisible side of reality?

DZ: Hints of everything are here, I am interested in expanding or activating more of my perception of the whole of reality exceeding the physical senses.

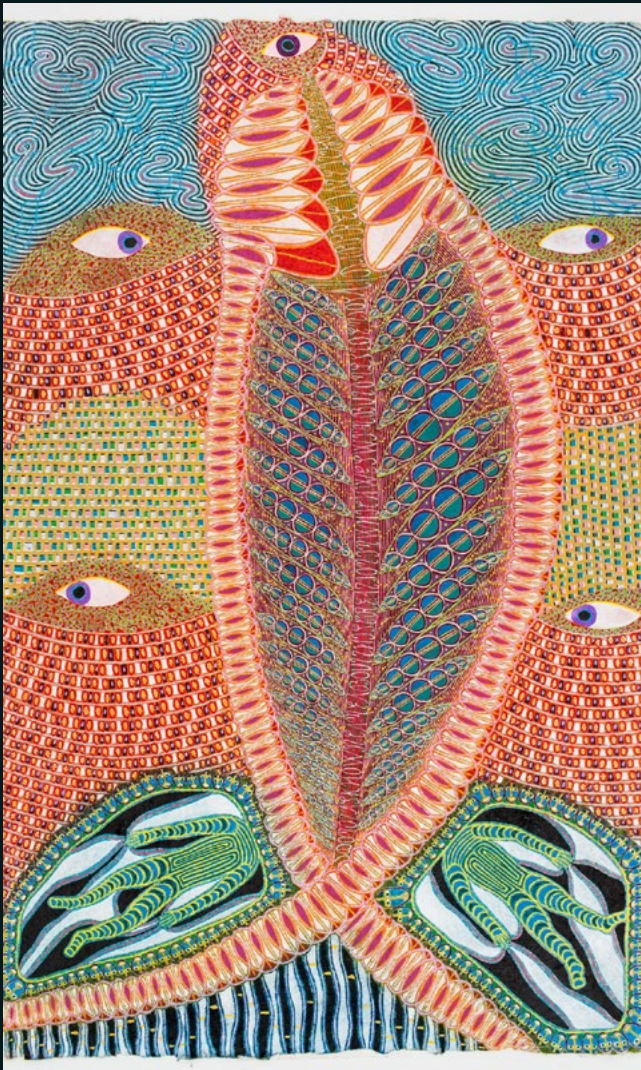
I have always been interested, so far as I can remember, in the romantic, the mystic, the esoteric, the mysteries, the hidden and the illuminating. They are all those aspects that escape, at first, any conclusive explanation. My work has reflected this, at different heights, throughout all my production. Anything about an energetic continuous pulsation has taken the stage, I would say in the last twenty years, in the making of a work and in what the work itself transmits.

AK: Is there a spiritual philosophy behind your art?



DZ: There is a sort of internal energy circulation that has been and still is at the core of my creative process and of what the viewer should make of it. The forms, colors and themes inside my work spring from an extremely relaxed state where this energy constantly circulates within me and expands to the surface where I am working, almost becoming one.

The sheer amount of this creative energetic field is enormous in its displaying possibilities, and brings me in a state of joyful contemplative meditative situation, all is solved immediately no questioning about what line, color or shape has to be made. I hope it brings the viewer to a similar state of mind.



The flux and flow of the energy circulating, as I feel it, doesn't have intention or will. Everything is solved and is realized in there. When you are entering or participating in, you become it and no distinctions exist between you and that flow. You have become that circulating energy, and my work has become that energy too. It is like practicing a magical art or spiritual practice that aims to bring you to the highest level of energy. My work is indeed a "training". Just do it and do it again with the least effort involved, until eventually you activate that blissful continuum.

AK: Some of your titles have a wonderful poetic quality, "We are Returned to Ourselves Through the River of Life" or "Purposes and Prayers of the Colored Mind Pouring Drops of Love Over the Feelings of Woven Worlds of Intuitions". Where do these titles come from? Are you inspired by any writers or poets?

DZ: For the titles, I start writing down words that suddenly comes up, while I am working or reading, and catch my attention as though they want to suggest something to me that I don't yet know. Later on, I combine them, like those stone constructions that can stand balancing one next or over the other, in an harmonious, poetic but still meaningful way.

Writers and poets, books in general, have always had a strong presence in my mind life. Myths, fairy tales, the fantastic, the great novels, encyclopedias, poetry, the dreams realm, the alternative sciences, the psychic and psychological, have always been at the forefront. Currently I just finished reading Orlando, by Virginia Woolf, and The Golden Bough, by James Frazer and am now reading Richard Brautigan's In Watermelon Sugar and Confessions of a Born Again Pagan by Anthony T. Kronman.

AK: I imagine your work, which is filled with painstaking detail, must take so much time. How do you feel about the experience of time when making your art? Do you notice the passage of time while you work?

DZ: I often listen to music while working and that makes time into more of a rhythmic sequence than a mere succession of minutes ticking by. Also, given the mantra-like quality of the details in many of my works, iterations of signs-figures-lines-dots, time reaches a total slowing down in my perception, getting to a "time zero" point, a feeling of almost absolute focus and presence in the moment.



AK: When we first met you shared an early project of yours, a reimagining of the tarot which combined your painting and photography. You had incorporated these images with a website where the various arcana were accompanied by audio contributions from some very talented musicians. I think this is a very interesting project and I am curious about how it came about and how you feel about the project today.

DZ: In the early '90s I was very interested in G.I. Gurdjieff's work. I had arrived at him after having read widely the works of Aleister Crowley, about the Golden Dawn, Blavatsky and other streams of early 20th century esoteric-spiritualist tradition. From Gurdjieff I moved on to P. D. Ouspensky a former student and collaborator of him. And I found out about the Fourth Way which intrigued me deeply.

Reading his works I came across a brief description of tarot arcana, which I remember impressed me because of its mythical, poetic style. That was 1994 and that same year I had spent a couple of months in Paris and had the chance to meet and receive tarot reading from Alejandro Jodorowsky. He was giving free tarot readings at a bar as part of a weekly event called “Cabaret Mystique”, very close to the apartment where I was staying. I had admired Jodorowsky as a movie director since long time. At this public reading I remember him telling me to “open my heart” and that I was a “mysterious man”, which he said with a hint of irony. When I got back to Berlin I started researching anything about tarots arcana and I wanted to make a tarot deck of my own.

More than recreating a divinatory deck of cards, I took it as a personal investigation of the deepest imagery at the center of my “heart” and see what I had to open. At the time I was working as well with photography, beside drawing and painting, and I had used since 10 years an infrared film, which allowed me to work in the way I wanted, giving a strange color patina and intense dreamy color to the staged sets that I was building and then photographing. This time I took as the starting point the Visconti-Sforza tarot’s deck because I felt it was the most minimal of all the decks and I could develop it with my imagination.

Almost two years later I finished photographing the twenty-two arcana. Then I thought to add a sort of electronic “score” to each of the cards, so I arranged a loop based on an arrangements of the seven notes and asked my musicians friends to choose a few cards each to make the music for. Once completed, the entire project was called “Trigger Vision”. It included the tarot arcana I photographed, the corresponding musical loops and these koan-sort of texts for each card. It was not meant for a classic divination purpose but as an imaginative exploration of what this combination of music text and pictures would be able to trigger in the viewer. The pictures have rather dark undertones, like those scary temples guardians protecting the inner core where you wish entering to find a blissful dimension. The music is quite abstract, and the texts are poetically open to interpretation.

The project never saw the light of day as a cd, which is what I originally planned to do, but 4 years later I turned it into a web site which I worked on with a friend at distance, since I had moved to Mexico by that time. That was in 2000, still early times for internet art. By then I had revisited the photos I had taken years before and I had retouched them with hand painted elements.

AK: Do you still have an interest in the tarot or other forms of divination?

DZ: I still love to look at various sets of tarot’s card and many are beautiful, though I rarely do readings by myself or go to sessions to have a reading done for me. I do look at mine own arcana sometimes for a feeling or an intuitive activation. Rarely I do I-Ching throwing anymore either.