

Concatenations
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Everywhere around us are the constant reminders that ours is a culture thoroughly in the grips of a technological imperative: the ubiquitous and ever-more sophisticated gadgetry, the impending displacement of all traditional means of image-making by digital media, the seemingly endless strings of letters, numbers, and symbols beckoning us to log on and join the global meeting of minds communing in cyberspace. Our craving for—and increasing dependence upon—new technologies seems to go unchecked in today's wired world. When will enough be enough? What exactly is it that we are trying to achieve with all our sophisticated "extensions"? At what point can it be said that we are pursuing higher and higher levels of technological development *just because we can, or because we feel we must*, and for no other (perhaps more inherently life-enhancing) reason?

My most recent body of work, entitled *Concatenations*, is a series of panel paintings (in conjunction with works on paper) that was spawned by these and other such questions about some of the more subtle cultural implications of advanced technology. Particularly of interest to me is the possibility that the immense popular appeal of these technologies is rooted less in our culturally normative ideas about "Progress" than it is in some much deeper, more fundamental and spiritual yearning (for self-transcendence?).

Fusing patterns abstracted from advanced computer technology (e.g., schematic diagrams for microprocessors, printed circuit boards, and the like) with forms and configurations alluding to sacred texts and symbols (such as the scroll, the illuminated manuscript, and the labyrinth), this work presents a quiet tension between the apparently antithetical strivings of technoculture and the mystical impulse—while at the same time asking whether there might not be a connection between them.

The abstract configurations that compose these pieces are made by overlapping and intertwining sets of small holes punched into the iridescent surfaces. Each of these sets is a unique pattern based on a very simple set of points which forms the core alphabet of the series. Variations deriving from this core set yield the different patterns of the larger sets (the "strands"). While being on the most immediate level a study of how simplicity and sameness can give rise to unforeseen complexity and variety, the methodology involved in the construction of the pieces represents, very generally, the scientific/technological mindset with its emphasis on isolated parts, precise details, and quantitative analysis. A contrasting worldview or mindset—one that stresses wholes rather than parts, ambiguity rather than precision, and intuition rather than rational intellect—is suggested by the ambiguous forms that make up the compositions and by the general contemplative aesthetic of the work.

The title of the series, *Concatenations*, refers both to the word's ordinary sense, in which it means a series of things linked or connected, and to the special sense in which it is used in computer science, where it refers to the connecting of two separate "strings" of code to form one singular string which means something different from the mere sum of the separate strings. In both usages there is a sense in which things that are considered separate—and possibly dissimilar or even antithetical—are brought together to form a unified whole, and it is precisely this tension between such "opposites" as reason and spirit, nature and culture, sacred and profane, analog and digital, that the work engages.