

Reckonings
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The *Reckonings* project consists of twelve pieces, each 23" x 40" on 300 lb. Saunders-Waterford paper, to be installed together in any of several possible configurations. Each piece has as its foundation 45 vertical "strings" (made by razor-thin incisions cut into the heavily-coated paper) evenly spaced across the picture plane. On these strings or vertical lines are many small holes made by nails pierced through the paper and enhanced by graphite to resemble beads or tiny knots hanging on the strings. Grouped together in regular clusters based on a templatic set of 87 dots arranged along three parallel lines, and laid down in systematic fashion with the utmost precision, the holes form fields of subtle yet discernible patterns. Slight shifts among the relationships between the dots in the initial set account for the widely divergent patterns among the twelve pieces.

Inspired by my study of the abacus and other computing technologies ancient to modern, this series addresses the relationship between quantification—calculating and computing—as a way of knowing, and the things that forever elude its grasp: values, meanings, purposes, and qualities. Given Western culture's reverence for science (with its tacit assumption that Truth inheres in numbers), it seems appropriate to wonder what happens to these more subjective dimensions that science cannot touch with its ever more powerful tools. Just as the need to know the world with rational certainty exists as a very compelling force, so does an equal and opposite force, which I see as our deeply suppressed but nonetheless urgent longing for genuine experience of the sacred, or for the inner certainty of being fundamentally connected to something greater than our individual selves. If quantification is defined by the activities of isolating, defining, measuring, and controlling, then clearly it does stand in direct opposition to the sacred, which is by definition immeasurable, indivisible, indefinable, and infinite. Quality is impervious to quantitative analysis, and quantity, which does not lend itself to qualitative analysis, cannot be described without recourse to the exacting and unequivocal language of number. Quality and quantity, form and substance, pattern and number, mind and matter, subject and object: by all accounts ours seems to be a divided world.

The *Reckonings* series grew out of my attempts to call into question not just the relationship between these binary oppositions, but the very notion of binary itself. As one of the hallmarks of modernity has been the loss of any transcendent reality, it seems inconceivable to us that two things that are diametrically opposed might form a unity on some other, higher level. However, as even physics, the most rigorous of the hard sciences, has shown, nature presents us with truths that utterly defy logic, such as the wave/particle paradox, where light appears to be not either wave or particle, but both wave and particle, depending on one's mode of observation. Could the same principle be true for other antitheses as well?

The synergy principle embodies one way of understanding the world that affirms antitheses rather than choosing one side of the pair to the exclusion of the other. According to this principle, the two opposing cosmic forces that give rise to all matter, life, and mind are continually evolving toward ever-greater complexity. An integral part of this process involves a synthesis of the two opposing forces which cannot be defined as the mere sum of its constituent parts. Within each newly created unity another split occurs, generating two new oppositions which will remain in a state of tension until they, too, reach a higher synthesis, and so on. Differentiation is always preceded by an original unity, and it is always followed by an integration, or synthesis, which is qualitatively different from and of greater complexity than what any quantitative analysis of its parts would disclose.

Ultimately, the question that interests me is whether this dialectical principle can be applied to the two very different approaches to reality engendered by the modern Western scientific mindset on the one hand and the more holistic, spiritual and systemic mindset generally characteristic of the East on the other. Essentially it is a question of parts versus wholes, the analytic worldview characteristic of the West having exceptional knowledge of isolated details and the systemic worldview possessing a far greater understanding of the whole and the interconnectedness of all parts. It is not a question of which approach is inherently superior to the other; the question seems to point beyond either one or the other, into the region of unity where all differentiation dissolves and only the process itself remains.