

About: **THE LOTUS AS METAPHOR**

The Lotus flower is regarded in many different cultures, especially in eastern philosophy, as a symbol of purity, enlightenment, self-regeneration and rebirth. Its characteristics are an appropriate metaphor for the human condition for, though the lotus has its roots in the mud, it blossoms beautifully in the world above.

I decided to depict the lotus in my next series. Living in New York City at the time, where could I find a lotus pond?

I telephoned the Bronx Botanical Garden. No luck. I telephoned the Brooklyn Botanical Garden. No luck. A friend suggested calling PepsiCo in Purchase, NY. I called. PepsiCo had a lotus pond! Success! Now, how to get there?

I obtained a train schedule and planned to leave early the next morning. But, as I left my studio for home that night, by chance I ran into my sometime cleaning woman who was waiting to be picked-up by her husband; she offered me a ride home.

Up the West Side Highway we went, off at the 79th Street exit, down Riverside Drive and . . . a lotus pond! Yes, Virginia, there exists a lotus pond in that heart of darkness, New York City, right at sidewalk level on 76th Street and Riverside Drive.

For years the lotus pond was a run-down, concrete monument built decades ago and empty of water or vegetation. About 1992, a neighborhood resident reclaimed the monument, filled the pool-shaped container with water, lotus blossoms, other plants, and *koi*.

Synchronicity is a concept, first introduced by psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung that holds that events are "meaningful coincidences" if they occur with no causal relationship yet seem to be meaningfully related.

I began photographing "my" lotus pond purposely using a "spiritual camera," that belonged to my sister but, after being dropped, was broken and allowed light to leak upon the images in an unpredictable manner.

The works on handmade paper in this series alternate laser prints of these "spiritual," i.e., light-leaked photographs, with painting and drawing amongst and between. Thus, these works depict a reality recorded by a "spiritual camera" and partially completed by a drawn representation of reality.

Maya is an important term in many Indian philosophies; it means "illusion" or "magic." *The Lotus as Metaphor* paper works practice what is known as "the trick of the *Maya*" or the "veils of the *Maya*." *Maya* connotes a magic show, an illusion where things appear to be present but are not what they seem. It also is a spiritual concept connoting "that that exists, but is constantly changing and thus is spiritually unreal."

The paintings in this series visualize the yin-yang symbol and the eight trigrams amongst the lotus flowers. The flowers themselves have varying numbers of petals, an acknowledgement of the influence upon me after reading **The Thirteen Petalled Rose**, written by the scholar Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz; it is based on the structures and assumptions of kabbalah. The title of the Steinsaltz book comes from the symbolic image used to represent the People of Israel in the opening lines of the mystical Jewish text known as the Zohar.