

About: **TRANS-ILLUMINATION** (aka **HEALING PORTRAITS**)

I thought about calling this series *Healing Portraits* rather than the somewhat obscure *Trans-Illumination*. My gift is one of intuition and compassion. (Trans-illumination (aka transillumination) is the shining of a light through a body area or organ to check for abnormalities.)

I ended painting the series *A Moving Point of Balance* in 1985, but I still wanted to continue exploring the relationship between art and healing.

In **Art as Experience**, John Dewey comments that art is a dynamic human experience that involves both the artist and the audience. When the audience encounters art, they are connecting with the artist's experiences and transforming the meaning of the art with their own.

In my 1986 *Trans-Illumination* series, I decided to involve the “audience” in the creative phase of the painting process prior to completion of the work.

I began by sending postcards to about 150 people asking if they would like to participate in sitting with me for an individual psychic reading stimulated by their involvement in painting a symbolic portrait of them. With each of the 25 who responded, I sat down opposite them in one-on-one sessions with a half-sheet of rag paper positioned vertically. I asked them to choose six Cray-Pas (oil pastels) and use them to draw six horizontal lines that divided the paper into seven areas.

I considered each of the seven horizontal painting areas to relate to one of the seven chakras, beginning at the bottom with the root chakra and working up the paper to the crown chakra. I began by instructing the participant and myself to focus on the base of the spine, which is where the root chakra has a correspondence in the physical world. Then we began a “reading” and painting

session where, chakra-by-chakra, I would “tune-in to,” i.e., trans-illuminate, a chakra and the corresponding appropriate part of the body. The process was silent in that I never asked for or received verbal feedback during the session.

While drawing, I sometimes added symbols such as a triangle symbolizing the masculine and a circle for feminine. At each part of the body and its chakra analog, I would sense information about my subject and draw the “portrait.” My color scheme usually followed the conventional one applied to each chakra (i.e., root equals red, sacral equals orange, etc.).

Subsequently, I used the small painting as a basis for a large painting; while I made some changes during this “translation,” I tried to keep them at a minimum.

As the series progressed, I became disturbed by the accuracy of my “readings” as commented upon by the subjects at a later stage. One person who participated was a stranger; as we talked he told me about his brother whom he loved dearly. With reluctance, I told him I was concerned about his brother’s health and suggested he visit him. He got on a plane and flew to see him; two days after he left the brother his sibling died of a heart attack.

Somewhat disconcerted, I stopped the series. John Dewey also said, “We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.” I learned that I have an overabundance of empathy and intuition, probably as a result of experiencing emotional trauma during childhood.

The one-person exhibition of this work opened April 6, 1986 at Elaine Horwitch Galleries in Scottsdale AZ.