

**Donna Johnson**

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Donna Johnson's work explores psychological and spiritual transformation merging her background as artist, art therapist, and Jungian psychotherapist. She is fascinated with the diptych format in art history and abstracting the forms of familiar folk motifs.

Following work rooted in mythology and psychological transformation, **Sacred Space** showcases Donna Johnson's series of diptychs inspired by the discovery of photographs of the backsides of Gothic/early Renaissance icons. On the reverse side of the painting, the artists apparently allowed themselves artistic freedom apart from the dictating eyes of the Catholic Church creating in many cases modernist abstract paintings. In this body of work Donna Johnson has painted on the fronts and backs of panels constructed for this purpose. The hinged diptychs painted in encaustic/mixed media are made for viewing on tabletop settings thus becoming sculptural pieces. Setting up this construct particularly difficult in encaustic media provides a vehicle for expression of sacred objects on a number of levels: 1) A means to go past/through the devotional object to a broader cosmic sense of spiritual enlightenment 2) A comparison of the backside as the cover of a book to convey the secular world in contrast to the inner/spiritual 3) A vehicle to ponder the limitations of organized religion.

Previous work in 2009 continued a 2008 theme of uniting east and west. **Riding the Dragon** blends east and west through merging imagery from the *Zen Oxherding Pictures* and a Celtic dragon representing western heritage of a similar time period as a substitute for the ox. The Celtic dragon was chosen to reference Celtic heritage and the history of European medieval art culminating in divine light through stained glass. The dragon represents a more primitive/ wild side of man until harnessed and then befriended. In the series, the dragon becomes a more spiritual image until it disappears completely leaving only spirit.

The **Alchemical** series was painted with the intention of viscerally experiencing alchemical processes toward a whole new level of "breaking free." For example, *Albedo* resurfaces to illumination after a depth descent whereas *nigredo* descends into one's shadow material or "dark night of the soul." *Rubedo* is the end product as the full ripening of sunrise and summer. *Sublimatio* is an air process of lightening one's heavy burdens for a new perspective.

Her current work is centered on an archway motif. The archway has been a significant threshold portal in European/Byzantine architecture, Moslem mosques as well as Shinto torii entrances to shrines.