

The past futures of **HOWARD RHEINGOLD**

a retrospective of art and ideas



INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE

FEBRUARY 7 — MAY 12

The Futures Underground at IFTF
201 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto



ACID FANTASY (DETAIL), 2014.



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FEBRUARY 7–MAY 12

The Futures Underground at IFTF
201 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto

Opening Reception: February 7, 2017

Scheduled tours:

March 14 12:30-1:00pm

April 12 12:30-1:00pm

May 12 12:30-1:00pm



Purple Vine, 2003



Pentagram and Eye, 2004



Hearts and Vines, 2005



Dots, 2007



Snakeyes, 2008



Green Eyes, 2014



Green Man, 2015



Space Crow, 2016

STEPS IN THE JOURNEY, 2003-2016

For decades, art has been the crucible of Howard Rheingold's ideas about the future of mind, technology, and community.

From painted shoes and sarongs to acid fantasies and mind boxes designed to expand consciousness, Howard's art reveals the intuitive energies that have fueled his journey from landmark organizations like Institute for Noetic Sciences and Xerox PARC to the *Whole Earth Catalog* and books like *Virtual Reality* and *Smart Mobs*. The Institute for the Future is proud to present this collection by one of its most Distinguished Fellows.

Curated by Toshi Hoo, Director
IFTF Emerging Media Lab



Foreword on Foresight, Insight, and Art

The futures field and IFTF itself emerged as an outgrowth of engineering planning and forecasting. But from the beginning, the field has also cultivated the less rational approaches to seeing into unknown and perhaps unknowable futures, drawing on art, imagination, creative expression, and speculation. For five decades, the work of Howard Rheingold has romanced these many paths to the future.

If you look over this half century of work, you can clearly see that two themes intertwine through Howard's thought and art: tools for amplifying the mind and tools for amplifying community. These themes have also braided themselves through IFTF's own foresight work, inevitably marking Howard as a fellow traveler, collaborator, and inspiration for decades.

Beginning in 2003, soon after the publication of his landmark book *Smart Mobs*, Howard brought his Cooperation Project to the Institute and its Technology Horizons program. The goal of the project was to collect the best thinking about cooperation across the academic disciplines of economics, political science, sociology, psychology, mathematics, biology, cultural evolution, history, and technology to build a theoretical and strategic foundation for the open source future in which we were rapidly creating new kinds of digital commons. This work led to reports, articles, conferences, and even a mandala-style map that, in some ways, resembles his spider web box art. It was the foundation for a collaborative project with Herman Miller on *Designing Business for an Open World*, and ultimately launched the Cooperation Commons online. Significantly, this collaboration fundamentally shaped IFTF's own evolution as a networked civic futures organization. In 2008, Howard became a Distinguished Fellow at the Institute.

We are pleased to collaborate with Howard in this very different kind of project, bringing together his decades of artwork to show the intuitive wellspring of his thought leadership. We invite you to explore this collection by imagining the links between the rational topline of Howard's career and the visions that shaped and were shaped by his artistic hand.

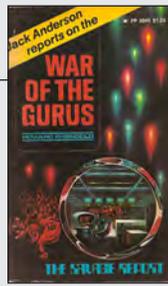
With much gratitude for Howard's contributions to the way we see the world,



Marina Gorbis, Executive Director
Institute for the Future

1964

At Reed College, as a National Merit Scholar, Howard studies the use of electronic technology to explore states of consciousness



1974

In *War of the Gurus* (Freeway Press) Howard explores a future in which three independent conglomerates of men and machines tool up for an autonomous triad of cosmic audacities

1977

The Martian Report takes an anthropologist's view of the streets of San Francisco in this tumultuous decade



HOWARD'S FAMILIAR SPIRIT, 1964

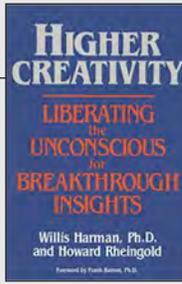
Upon arrival in our dormitory room at Reed College, a friend and I ate morning glory seeds. Naturally when we realized we were too merged into the universe to show our faces at orientation, we started to paint. The psychedelic soup of the floorboards reared up into this guy, who only appeared for a moment, grinned at me, and dissolved again. I called him Howard's Familiar Spirit.

NFS



1978

Playboy magazine commissions "Future Highs"



1982

At Institute of Noetic Sciences, Howard co-authors **Higher Creativity** with IONS founder, Willis Harman

1983

Working with **Xerox PARC** scientists, Howard explores "higher level protocols" and "data grams" as a way to send information around networks



HOWARD'S FAMILIAR SPIRIT, 1994

Nearly 30 years later, Howard's Familiar Spirit was the only physical object I still owned that I had owned in 1964. I decided to paint a contemporary version in acrylic instead of oil. Maybe I will redo him again in virtual reality.

NFS



OG ORIGINAL GARUDA, 1976

In the early 1970s, importing clothing from Nepal, I grew fascinated with a rendering of the Hindu demi-god Garuda on a postage stamp and painted this rendition before I knew anything about Garuda's story. An important figure in both Hindu and Buddhist iconography, Garuda appears in art and religious statuary from the Himalayas to Bali.

NFS

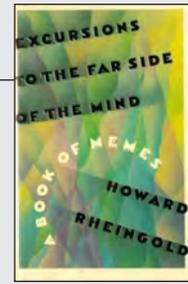


1985

In *Tools for Thought*, Howard anticipates the potential of human augmentation through computing, drawing on insights of early computing pioneers

1987

The concept of virtual communities debuts in Howard's contribution to the Winter issue of the *Whole Earth Catalog*



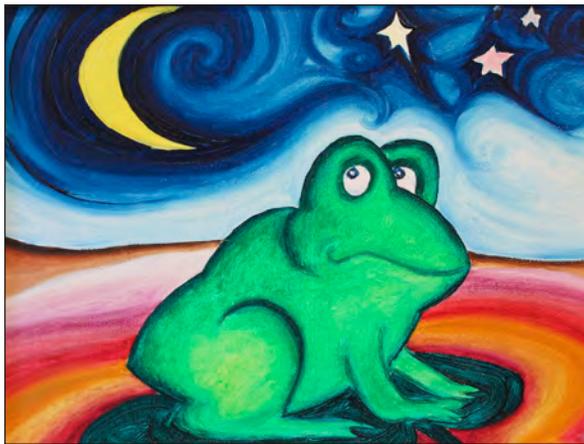
1988

An edited collection of Howard's published essays appears in *Excursions to the Far Side of the Mind*



PEAR OF THE FUTURE, 1984

I painted this vision for my daughter Mamie on the day she was born, November 2, 1984.
NFS



MOONSTARS FROG, 1985

Painted for Mamie on her first birthday
NFS



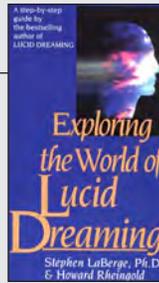
WINGED HEARTSUN, 1987

Painted for Mamie on her third birthday
NFS



1990

Virtual Reality anticipates the evolution of digital technology evolving in virtual spaces, decades ahead of his first experience with the immersive 3D system Tilt Brush, at IFTF



1990

Continuing his interest in technologies of consciousness, Howard collaborated with Stephen LeBerge, from Stanford's Sleep Laboratory, to publish *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming*

ORANGE RHAPSODY, 1988

In the early 1990s, I switched from oil paints to acrylics. This is one of the last oil paintings before the switch.

\$789.10



BLUE GRADIENT, 1990

One of my last oil paintings before I switched to acrylics, this one is part of a series (along with Bronze Gradient) where I put paint on the canvas directly from the tube and then painted quickly in a brush-dance.

\$891.01

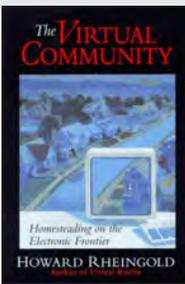


BRONZE GRADIENT, 1990

Like Blue Gradient, this oil painting emerged in a rapid brush-dance after putting paint directly on the canvas from the tube.

\$891.01





1993

With *The Virtual Community* (Summit Books), Howard zeros in on the social potential of communicating via computers, which eventually earns him the title of “first citizen of the internet”

1994

When *Wired* magazine moved online, Howard became the first executive editor of the digital version of the magazine, called *HotWired*



2002

Years ahead of the iPhone, Howard spotted the next wave of digital communities in his book *Smart Mobs*



BLUE RADIATION, 1990

Another dance with paint directly from the tube, using Chinese-style brush strokes.

\$456.78

BLUE FIBONACCI PLANT, 1996

I’ve been interested in two natural phenomena for a long time: the Fibonacci sequence and Fibonacci spiral as manifested in Nature, on one hand, and the Fibonacci eerie blue glow of Cherenkov radiation on the other. I combined the two in this oil painting.

\$910.11



GOD'S THIRD EYE, 2001

Some paintings render an idea I already have (seeing), and some paintings start with a couple of seeds (roots, all-seeing eye) and grow as I paint them (looking).

\$3,141.59



2003

Purple Vine

2004

Having undertaken the Herculean task of collecting and sorting through all the academic research related to cooperation, Howard worked with IFTF to produce a series of reports on cooperation and a paper published in IEEE on “Technologies of Cooperation”



2004

Pentagram and Eye

TRANS-EUCLIDEAN SOLIDS, 2002

A small painted wood cone, pyramid, and cube on the painted wood cube base is enclosed in a bell jar.

\$1,234.56



BALINESE GARUDA, 2005

The night after my daughter's college graduation, I flew to Singapore for a speaking engagement. I had always wanted to visit Bali, so I spent a week there on the way back, and on my return, I painted furiously for a couple days. This Balinese Garuda assumed a less fierce martial aspect than my original Garuda, and it took on some characteristics of a friendly cartoony spirit animal in my rendering.

NFS



2005

At the annual TED conference, Howard talks about "The New Power of Collaboration"

Walking the cooperation talk, Howard launches the Cooperation Commons online as a place to collect artifacts of cooperative inquiry: cooperationcommons.com

2005

Hearts and Vines



2007

Dots



JUNGIAN LOTUS TREE, 2006

When I saw Jung's Red Notebook, finally published in 2009, I was taken aback. Had I absorbed so much of his sensibility when I read his work and saw some of his art in college? Had Jung also taken psychedelics? Or were we both tapping into the source he talked about? In any case, there are paintings that render an image I already have in mind (which requires seeing) and there are paintings that start somewhere (in this case, I wanted to do something like the Celtic knot trees I had seen where limbs and roots intermingle) and then emerge (which requires looking). Soon thereafter, my Burning Man camp, The Mindshaft Society, worked with me to realize this image in sculptural form, seven feet high, rugged enough to withstand the sandstorms and winds on the playa. It's been weathering the past decade pretty well outside my office-studio.

NFS



STONE BIRD, 2009

This small alabaster sculpture of a stylized deco-ish bird head sits on a dark walnut base. I captured intermittent video while sculpting it. Video is displayed on a small screen powered by a Raspberry Pi, housed in a wooden square octahedron.

\$2,345.67 for sculpture and video kiosk



2008

Invited to teach new media literacies at Stanford and UC Berkeley, Howard built the **Social Media Classroom**, using digital tools to prototype a web-based platform that combined forums, blogs, wikis, and chat in a single sign-on medium

2008



Snakeyes



2011

Convening students and teachers from around the world, Howard led a volunteer project to create **The Peerogogy Handbook**, dedicated to understanding how peers can take turns facilitating learning

STONE LEAVES, 2010

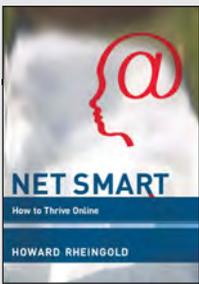
This sculpture is a green alabaster set of leaf-forms.
\$1,234.56



BEEEEE, 2011

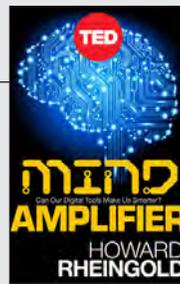
I saw a bee carved in stone on a street in Rome, sketched it in the Moleskin I carry when I travel, and painted from my sketch. It's hard to get a sense of the world and where it is going if you spend all your time in California/America.
\$910.11





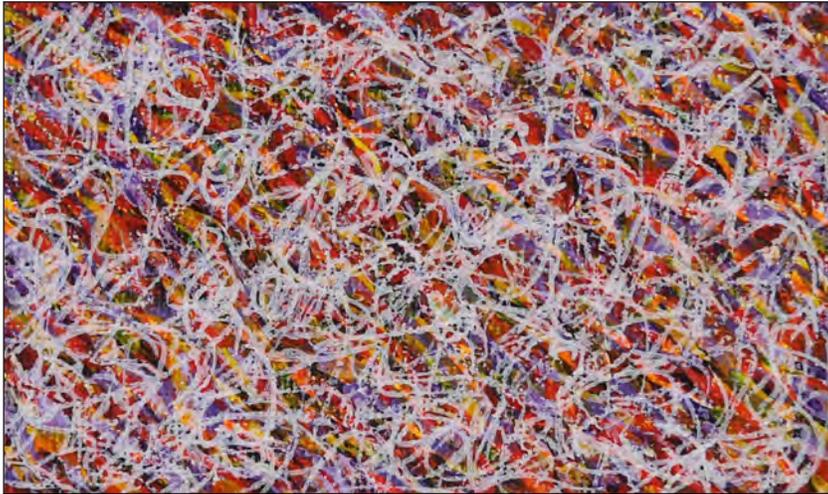
2012

In *Net Smart* (MIT Press) Howard outlines five fundamental digital literacies: attention, participation, collaboration, critical consumption of information, and network smarts



2013

Invited by TED to write an ebook, Howard penned *Mind Amplifier* to sum up his thinking on mind tools and culture



WHITE TANGLE, 2012

I wiped brushes on this canvas while making a pair of painted shoes, then overwrote with white. **\$567.89**



ARE YOU AWAKE?, 2013

When I started using LEDs to illuminate work like the Illuminated Sarong, I discovered that fluorescent colors popped under different colored lights. At the same time, I discovered the heptagram when I somehow found the sigil of a demon online. I knew I didn't want to go there, but I immediately image-searched for "sigils of angels" and found the diagram that Elizabethan alchemist John Dee allegedly used to communicate with angels. I substituted my own messages and painted them so that different messages would be illuminated with different colors. Then I bought a kit that enabled me to use infrared sensors to change the illuminating colors by waving my hands. I built the hexagonal box— I've been on a hexagonal box kick—and included the painting, illumination, and infrared interface. **\$15,161.71**

2014



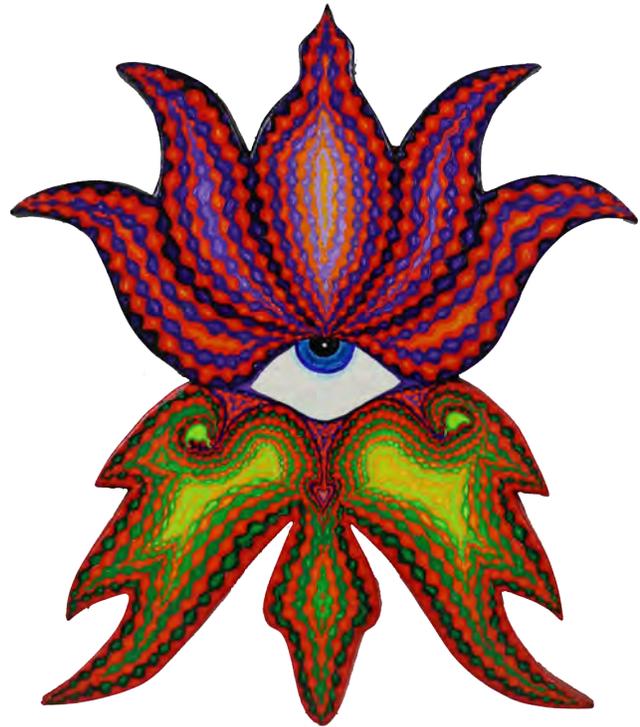
Green Eyes



MAGIC BOX, 2014

Crafted from cedar, maple, dark walnut, and poplar with a painted false bottom, this box plays Satie's *Gymnopédies* and illuminates a bright multicolored, changing LED when opened. Color diffuser is a painted half ping pong ball. It contains a selection of Dr. Rindbrain's custom fragrances.

\$2,345.67



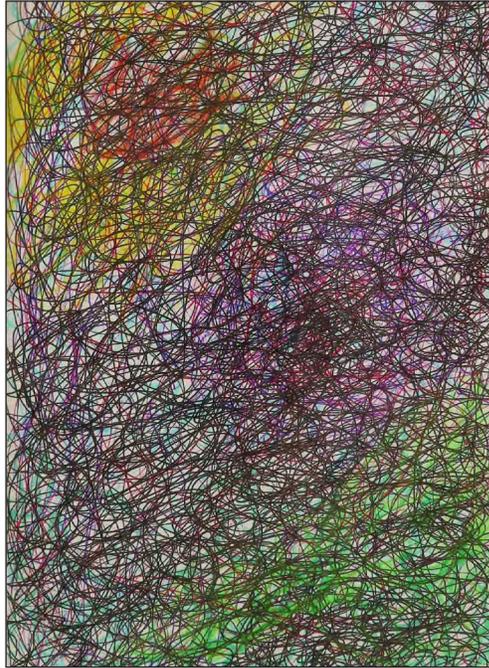
ICU, 2014

Jigsaw-formed birch plywood is the substrate for this all-seeing eye on a lotus field. My Burning Man camp buddies gave me a jigsaw for my 60th birthday. Why paint on only squares or rectangles? I started seeing the shape of the painting surface as part of the creation.

\$1,819.20

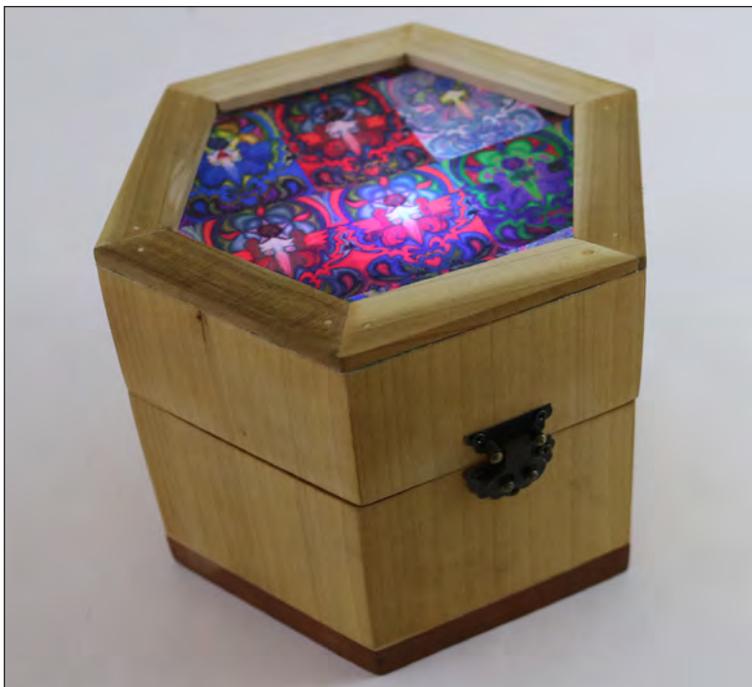
2014

Teaching an online course on digital media and learning, Howard explores the world of “maker ed”



ACID FANTASY, 2014

Forty-five years after my last acid trip, I took it again to check whether the values and beliefs I have lived for most of my life—including the belief that much of what I perceive is a semi-delusional “consensus trance”—were, in fact delusional. I don’t think they are. During the trip, I allowed my hand to move the pen in a kind of automatic pen dance. The first 25 people who request a signed and numbered, framed giclee print, can have one for **\$234.56**.



HEXAGONAL MENTAL ILLUMINATOR, 2015

In this hexagonal box of poplar, with a Photoshopped version of Garuda Numero Uno printed on silk by soundflower.com, two switches activate changing colored LED illumination from inside the box and an audio recording of a remixed version of Satie’s Gymnopédies. **\$1,234.56**



2015

Green Man



EYE-HAND RADAR, 2015

I used a nicely shaped scrap of plywood that resulted from one of my shaped painting surfaces, painted it with acrylic, glued on a ceramic hand I bought in a store, created an eyeball out of paper, clay, and acrylic paint. I hand-turned a laminated wood base and used a Teensy Arduino to control of motor—my first experiment with physically animating my work.

\$789.10



BLINKING GARUDA, 2016

I made a shaped painting surface, modeled on my Balinese Garuda painting, and added microcontroller-powered OLED “creepy eyes.”

\$4,567.89



CHOCOLATE COFFEE POT, 2016

My friend David Gans asked me to paint cover art for his jam band's CD. The name of the band is Chocolate Coffee Pot.

\$789.10

2015

At rheingold.com/learning, Howard curates all the coursework he has developed over his years of teaching at Stanford and UC Berkeley

2016



Space Crow



MAGICAL THOUGHT BOX #1, 2016

Route One Gallery in Point Reyes Station has a “Box Show” every year, where they invite artists to pick up wooden boxes and then art them up. It’s a popular show, and you have to enter a lottery to get in. Year after year, I never did. But last year, I received an email that I had won the lottery. I discovered that my wife and a friend both signed me up for the lottery without telling me. This effort combines laser-cut and hand-painted pieces with a wooden box and LED illumination. The box was purchased at auction and is exhibited here with permission of its owners, Dr. Are We Realy and Dr. Truly Magical.

NFS



MAGICAL THOUGHT BOX #2, 2016

Like Magical Thought Box #1, this one uses a heptagram and laser-cut parts, but the color scheme is flashier.

\$4,567.89

MAGICAL STAR BOX, 2016

A hexagonal wood box frames 135 laser-cut, hand-painted pieces of plywood, illuminated by neopixels, driven by Arduino.
\$12,345.67



MIND BOX, 2016

Fascinated by Huichol art and other visionary painting, and attracted to the effect of radiated light on pigment, I created this box to have a mild noetic effect.
\$678.91





COSMOGENIC MIND LENS, 2016

For triggering expanded states of consciousness, this small box is best viewed in the dark.

\$777.77



COSMONOETIC TRANSPORTER, 2016

This small box is best viewed in the dark for triggering expanded states of consciousness.

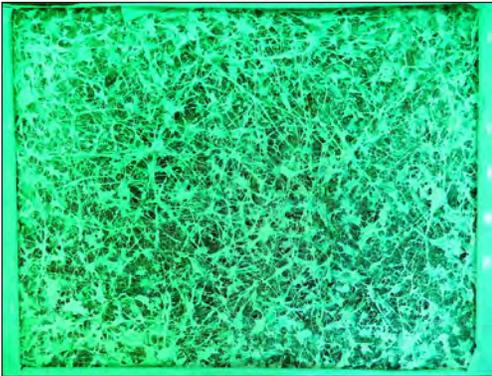
\$999.99

**MARTIAN ANTHROPOLOGIST IN A BOX,
2016**

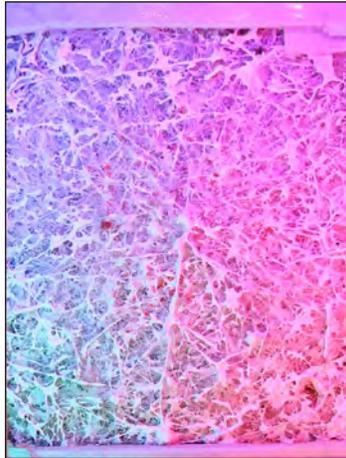
Painted with stars, this cubic dodecahedron has a two-inch video screen. Inside is a Raspberri Pi that powers the screen and plays video of *The Martian Report*.

\$2,345.67

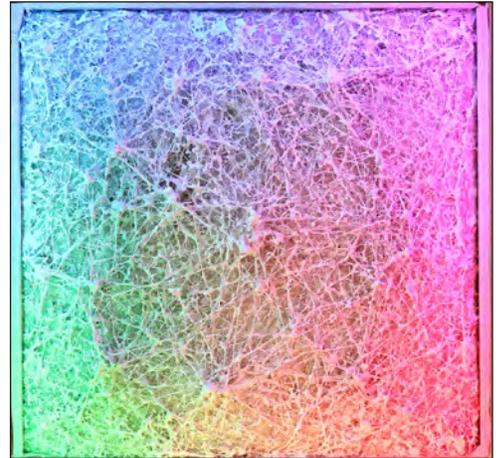




SPIDER WEB BOX #1, 2014
\$4,567.89



SPIDER WEB BOX #2, 2015
\$3,141.59



SPIDER WEB BOX #3, 2015
\$4,567.89

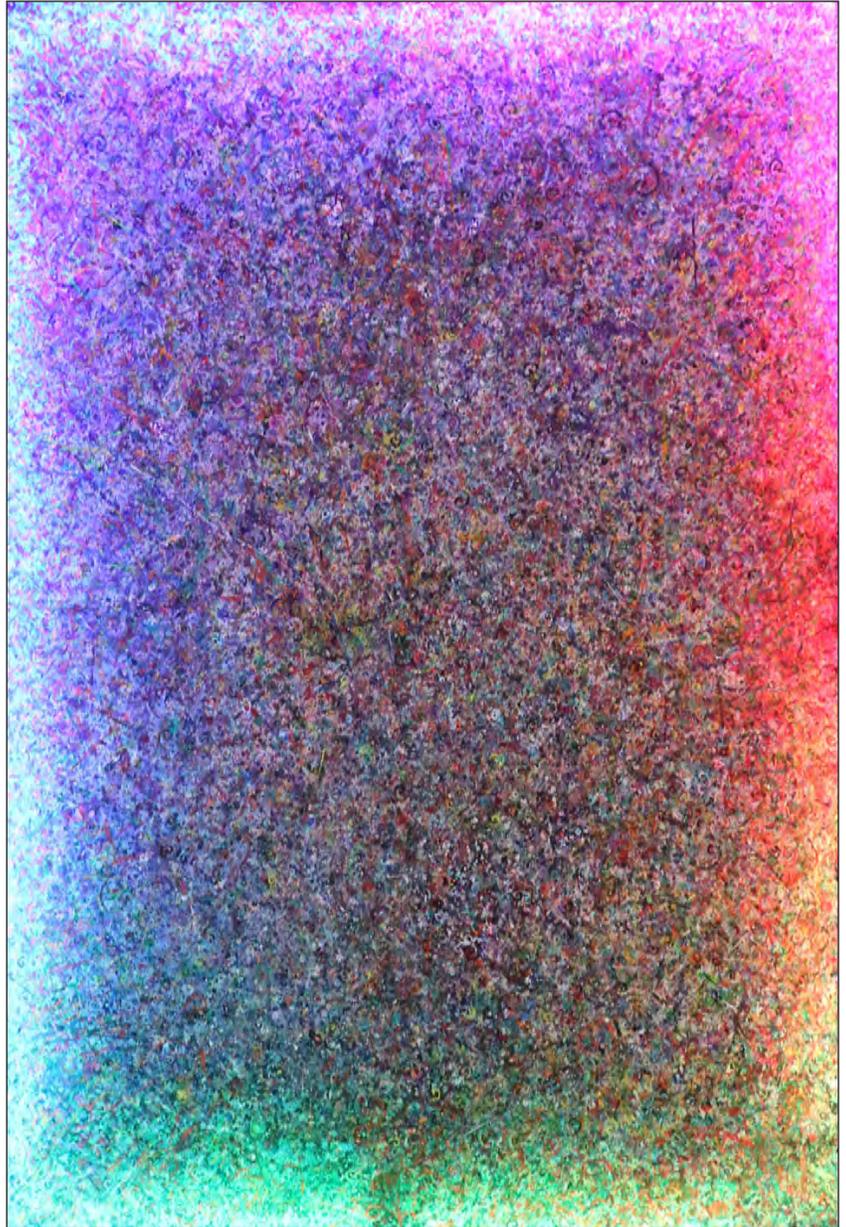
SPIDER WEB PAINTINGS

The outbuilding on my property that is now Pataphysical Studios was a greenhouse for a long time. Terence McKenna contributed plants of ethnobotanical interest. Spiders liked that room. I hung a couple of my paintings, and when I discovered that spiders had webbed the surface, I figured that two could play this game. I painted canvases with white acrylic molding medium and waved them around in the spider webs. Then I sat down with reading glasses and a very fine brush and hand-painted the webs with white acrylic paint. After many, many layers, they took on some depth. The spider web paintings sat in my studio for about 15 years, but when I discovered LED strips, I started building wooden boxes, inserting LEDs, controlled by Arduino micro-controllers, to make illuminated boxes.

ILLUMINATED SARONG, 2001-2014

A painted linen cloth used as a sarong at Burning Man three times since 2001 was also used as a sarong while I painted for more than ten years. I wiped my brushes on the linen out of conviction that the cloth I wipe my brushes on is as much a work of art as the canvas. I used it as a drop cloth when I splatter-painted. In 2014, I mounted it on a wooden frame and illuminated it with an Arduino-controlled LED strip.

\$23,456.78



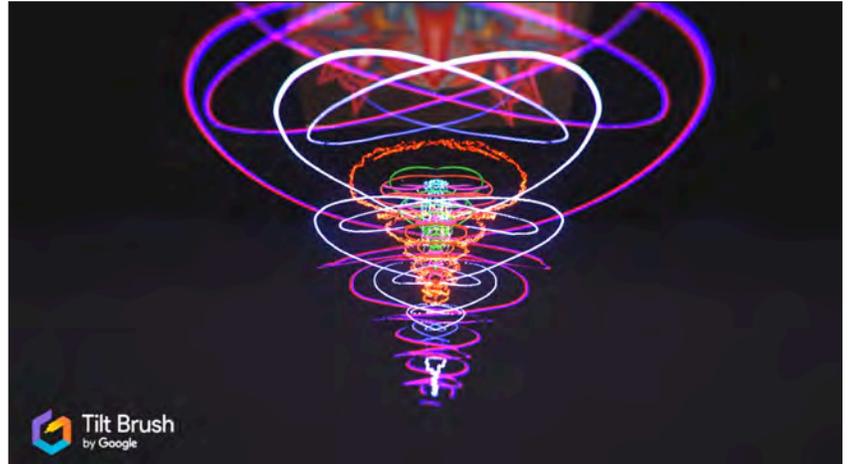
2016

Preparing for this exhibit, Howard visits IFTF's **Emerging Media Lab** and relaunches his exploration of virtual reality



HOWARD TILTBRUSHING, JANUARY 2017

HOWARD'S ART IN A VR GALLERY #1, 2017



HOWARD'S ART IN A VR GALLERY #2, 2017





To purchase any of the art in this collection,
please contact: [**howard@rheingold.com**](mailto:howard@rheingold.com)



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