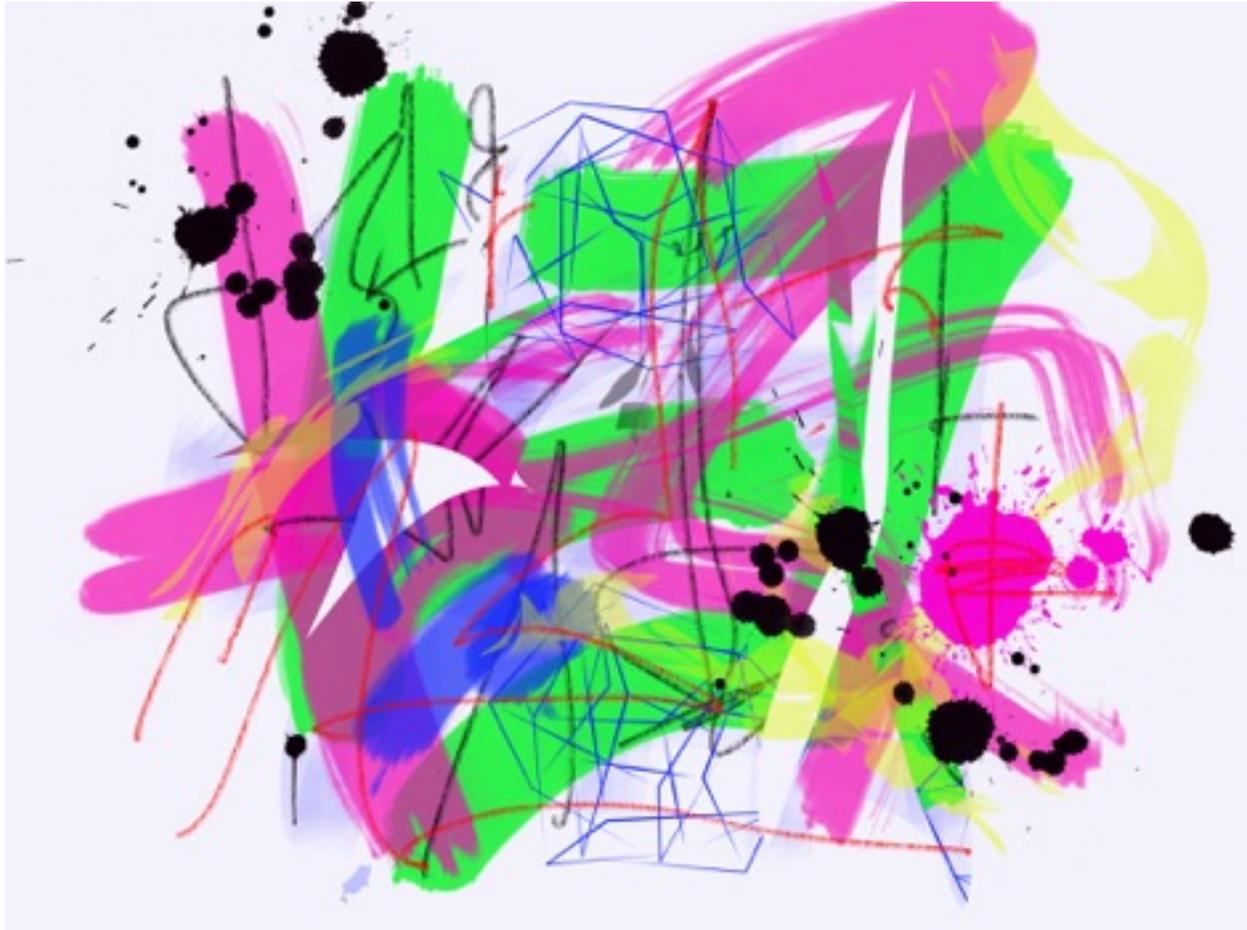


# Where is the Virtuality of Painting?

I love texture whether fabric, textiles, crochet, sculpture or painting. When I paint I love getting my hands in the materials - much more than using a brush.



Kathleen Forsythe Abstract, 1 Digital painting, Aug. 2016

So imagine my frustration when a change in circumstance - ( a house move and an over-the-top job) deprived me of the space of making art - both physically and psychically. Unfortunately the battle for my creativity has waged in me for well over 50 years as the poet, writer and artist slipped into the shadows in favour of the organizational visionary and knowledge architect, happy at designing and building new organizations.

To keep the poetics of my soul intact I began to write haiku in my teen's - leading me to think in haiku (the poet's mathematics!) as part of the poesis of my experience. I have never had the time to deliberate on the structure of poetry writ long although I deeply appreciate it, being the daughter and literary heir to Fred Cogswell, master of the sestina. In the heady days of the 1980s when I was first introduced to the ideas of second order cybernetics and the mind altering thoughts of Gordon Pask and Humberto Maturana, I immediately transformed my understanding of the concepts I was learning into haiku and poetry. I was busy building telecommunications

organizations at the time and had no space for other kinds of writing. It was 30 years ago, in 1987 that I also met my friend, the painter Frank Galuszka, at a cybernetics meeting in St. Gallen, Switzerland, a meeting so seminal that one could mark one's creative life as before and after St. Gallen! Ideas and images from those few days still filter through the creative ethos.

About 12 years ago I re-encountered a colleague from my youth, Milton Harley, <https://nationalgalleryofjamaica.wordpress.com/category/milton-harley/> who was one of the first abstract expressionists in the Caribbean, having studied painting in New York in the 50s and been very influenced by the New York school. He visited with my father and I for a month and painted while he was here in Canada. We had many discussions on aesthetics and where paintings come from. When he went home he left his paints and I, not wanting to waste such excellent quality paints, picked them up and began painting again after almost 40 years away from art. Colour, mark making and texture intrigued me and informed the abstraction of my expression.

So when I moved in 2013 and cramped my capacity to paint after painting for 8 years, I found another way. It happened in a week alone visiting my grandson in Japan in the summer of 2014. The hot temperatures prevented me from going outside. In desperation I downloaded a painting app to my iPad and Voila! I began to paint with my finger on a screen.

I have no patience to learn how to use applications so I played and innovated and explored, making the applications do what I wanted and discovering the happy accidents I so delight in.

I had my first solo exhibition in the spring of 2016 where 20 of my digital paintings were displayed, printed on aluminum and acrylic. And I did this, while going through some of the most challenging aspects of my organizational career. The iPad painting kept my soul alive and helped me maintain my sanity!

In the artist talk I gave at the show I asked the question about the materiality of art and the creative process of painting when there is no real paint and everything exists in a virtual domain.



Kathleen Forsythe, HighPower Egg, digital painting on aluminum, 2016

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## The Materiality and Virtuality of Painting

### Painting Love

The artist makes love  
to the canvas. Skin tingles  
as the brush touches.

What is going on when someone in love with texture can make marks so easily with a finger on a screen and can 'cut and paste' dimensions of the marks in *infinitum*. Where do the virtual and the real co-exist? What is the process of creativity when the composition of the painting can emerge in a timeframe that differs from the act of the hand or brush on the canvas.

In what domain is the abstraction arising...and does it matter?

I am now moving to a new home with a studio- having retired from the overwhelming job. I long for the time and the texture and the handling of the material. Will I give up my iPad? I don't think so.

What will be the art that I produce be like after my 3 year journey inside virtuality? How will this journey between domains have affected my imagination?

### The Painter

Spending time  
with my friend, the painter  
I begin to see  
with his eyes

and, rocking  
on the porch  
in the breeze of early morning

I watch the stark simplicity  
of form before me  
reflect  
the interior  
of what is not there

And wonder at how  
I can speak my voice  
int the art  
that I know -  
the making of poems  
when the words

seem to be  
the form of the paint  
itself?

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## An Epistemology of Imagination- how we imagine reality in the first place

These questions go to the heart of our understanding of the biology and the epistemology of imagination...something that I claim is necessary for us to actual imagine reality.

It is imagination that is the poiesis of experience...the fundament of both perception and conception. The ability of our central nervous system to both configure regularities and detect them and, in the process of such composition become aware of our co-existence with each other. I am claiming that imagination is a the fundamental generative mechanism by which the central nervous system composes its perception, and in languaging animals, composes what we experience as conceptualization. And the perception-conception dynamic is so intimately braided in we humans that we no longer are aware of its existence. We actually define imagination as something that is not "real" failing to realize that it is the imagination which enables us to even construct our notions of reality in the first place.

Imagination, in this sense, is how we compose our past, our present and our future from the dynamic temporal architecture of our biology. It is a fundamental coordination of our being within the emerging energy, the matrix of possibilities from which we experience the material world as our central nervous system detects the distinctions and coherences within our medium as it arises dancing with us in the changing present.

Because we have come to live in language as a fish lives in water, we have forgotten that we live fundamentally as living systems within the living system of the biosphere and that the words we generate and unfold together are constructed in language from our experiences within the medium of the living systems of living systems. And so we have separated ourselves from our own fundament, our imaginative faculty and denigrated it to a fantasy, something not to be taken seriously. In this way we have become trapped within the current compelling arguments for reality, as if we were objects walking in a landscape forever separate, distinct and isolated within the boundary of our skin.

And yet...it is the imagination that lets us conceive of worlds that we cannot perceive...These worlds are unfolded from the configurations of our own central nervous system, and, in this sense all have validity in the multiversa of universes that we both compose, experience and live within at the same time. Our experiences are just as real in all the worlds we inhabit...both those of our dreams, those of our creative imagination and those of what we call our reality...they are real because our central nervous system does not distinguish between illusion and reality except after the

fact...and in this sense, there is no distinction in the moment in which we live...all experiences are lived in the body, by the body and in turn modulate the body in the ever changing dance of existence.

And this is the role of art...it is that place where the boundaries between the many worlds dissolve and we can play with the compositions or our own being. My friend, Frank Galuszka, paints what he sees in his mind's eye and in the seeing, the vision of the minds' eye changes and so does the painting and in, this sense, the painting becomes an image of the process of the imagination in its realization such that when anyone sees the painting, they, too are drawn into this place within the composition of configurations...this space in which the central nervous system is itself in poiesis and sees itself. And, in this sense, the imagination is the only infinitely renewable aspect of our humanity as we unfold "the infinite interior"...we unfold the emergence of our own autopoiesis as we live through the poiesis of experience, the biology of the imagination.



Kathleen Forsythe "The Kitchen", digital painting, 2017

These ideas...resonant and alive as they were when I first wrote them well over 25 years ago, after a visit to Frank's studio...still inform my vision and the unfolding of my creative life.

So where does newness come from...How do the marks emerge whether on a canvas or an iPad screen? What is our creativity? What is really going on when we make a mark on the blank space what is this capacity we have to cleave the nothing and make something relevant ...?

In a recent publication , my friend the mathematician, Lou Kauffman, put it this way.

Let us return to the self-reference of the mark, the “first distinction.” We said in §1 herein → , indicating the self-reference of the mark. But we did not reach the bottom of the rabbit hole. For the arrow itself is a mark and it is the mark itself that refers to itself and so this expression must be replaced simply by a single mark that is understood to be in the act of self-reference, coalesced with the observer who reads and understands this epistemology of the imagination.

What is created is the imagination of a distinction. Beyond that there is nothing to say.

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Kathleen Forsythe "The Imagination of a Distinction", digital painting, 2016