

Steve Brudniak: Ontological Catastrophe

New Work Since 2010

Curated by Benito Huerta

Steve Brudniak's complex, surreal, scientific and psychogenic assemblages span a 40-year exhibition history. Pieces take months, even years to complete. Six art museums have collected pieces, and hundreds of video, web, book, and print publications include the work, which has exhibited nearly 200 times. The monograph, *The Science of Surrealism - Assemblage Sculpture of Steve Brudniak* is in over 75 major public, university and museum libraries worldwide.



In Steve Brudniak's Own Words

These are multimedia assemblages, refined from extraordinary materials, routinely invested with phenomenal science elements: Previous works have gone into space, contain the oldest life forms on earth, produce lightning, react intelligently, manipulate magnetic fluids, employ human blood; sometimes even pioneering those techniques. These techniques, fused with objects become, in effect, permanent, self-contained installations. Not collage, but tenable apparatuses and totemic devices as paradigms for psychological and transcendental function. They echo the forsaken modern art world yet have a foot in the postmodern. Found objects are seamlessly combined in seemingly impossible ways. A sea of solid brass swims with equally solid 200-year-old brass fish, antique electrical test equipment has been morphed into impossible crystal formations, and common ABS plastic is carved and treated into super real, fantastically improbable prehistoric tusks and bone. Holy oils fill industrial chambers; scientific formulas and ancient cuneiform text are carved, out of context, into antique iron slabs. Various rare, old, and unusual objects, like iron fireplace frames from 2 centuries past, are retrofitted into completely new, seemingly institutional configurations. A sliced meteorite becomes a boilerplate. Objects are pulled from a time and place that only exist in an alternate history. Time and history become something seen from a new perspective.



A dream retold will come off as boring description, but to be inside the dream is inexplicably rich.

Conceptual to a point, the works aim to produce a state where there are no narrative thoughts. They are stories that words cannot tell and only the individual can interpret. Dreaming. We watch this 21st century in isolation as things we never thought could happen, do. Right and wrong are no longer cut and dry, and reality comes into question. We are dealt an ontological catastrophe and the universe is challenging us... individually. My work has always been engineered to affect intimately on an individual

level - sharing with and testing individuals . . . and doing so, testing the Universe itself. I hope to share a glimpse of worlds we are not aware of through ordinary channels, behind the curtain of reality into realms influenced by science, dreams, meditation, hypnosis, therapy, psychedelics, music, the subconscious, and what is vaguely referred to as spirituality. I don't see spirituality outside the realm of science, which is merely the explanation of what is, even if it's not available to our five senses... yet. Many believe entheogenic chemistry and metaphysics have allowed us to surpass those five to commune with other beings, visit ulterior realms, and understand entirely new experience. Standard technology has brought us radio, X-ray, infrared and computational tools that go far beyond our sensory capabilities. By including scientific, illusory, and other novel elements into my work I hope to skirt the edge of those five senses and flirt with unique perceptions. So . . . I question reality constantly.

Click any image or [link](#) for more photos and information concerning concept and process.

Ontological Catastrophe 2020 51 x 31 x 7 inches. The metaphorical correlation to my life and the world at large during this time cannot be denied. The antique Bakelite test equipment was painstakingly sliced and retrofit into geometries that mock nature's unprecedented crystal formations. Our tools used to test reality have taken an unprecedented turn as well. (cont.)





Physics' incredible double slit experiment, which baffled scientists by proving that mere observation of an experiment can drastically change its outcome, is engraved into the antique iron (fireplace frames), and the tusk of an impossible extinct beast hangs from the bottom like an ivory trophy. More on tusks further...





In the Wake of the Exodus Toward the Breach in the Gate 2018 82 x 33 x 8 inches. Two years were dedicated to making this piece, inspired by Rodin's *The Gates of Hell*. A living ultraviolet light fluctuates in an uncanny, spellbinding way as the viewer changes perspective. (cont.)



19th century brass dolphins swim toward the ultraviolet light within a sea of brass. (cont.)





The inner frameworks are modified antique iron fireplace frames, the outer is black phenolic resin. The fossil of a fish rests in limestone below a visceral, endless, brass millipede coiled inside a glass tank of red holy oils. I believe there is a personal and evolutionary trajectory toward something greater that has always been in motion. Escape from one boundary into the next challenge seems inevitable and universal. Pardon this vague talk. I don't like to speak conceptually about the work much these days, other than to set forth some basic clue from my perspective. It is visual art and to be interpreted thus.



This Long Lasting Ghost 2021 15 x 20 x 2 inches. Features a similar millipede tank upon which is engraved a poem in ancient cuneiform text. Clicking the image will bring up the translation and more info. I have long used chambers to contain beasts that wreak internal havoc. I recently began an innovative therapy called EMDR, aimed at exorcising some of these beasts, begat of past trauma. I've become enamored with tusk and bone and tooth and you will see the technique here, labored over lovingly in several pieces.

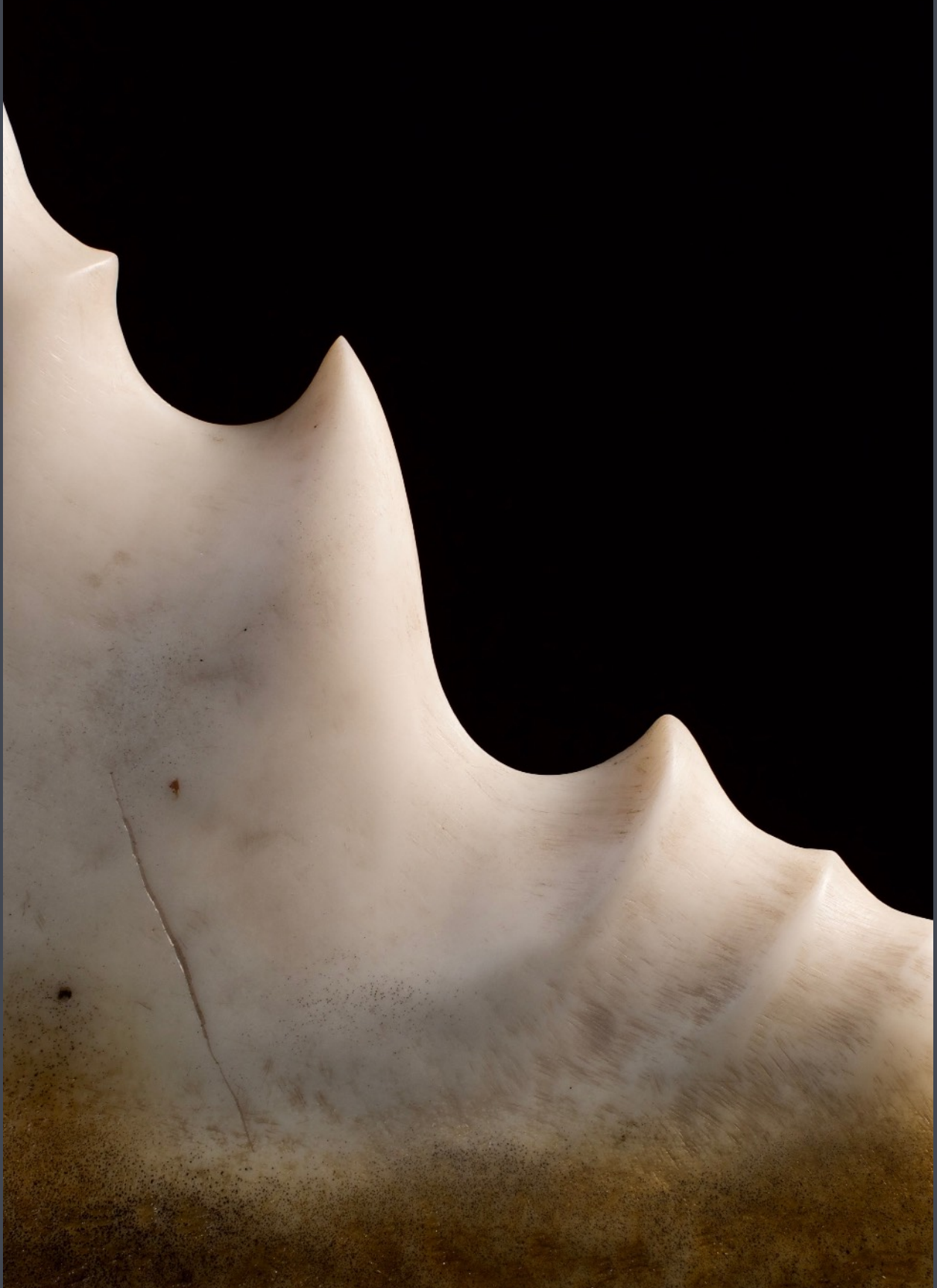






Tusk of the Solipsisaur 2019 21 x 15 x 5 inches. Case in point concerning tusks... This is a study for *Ontological Catastrophe*. It may one day serve as a maquette for a public-art-scale version.





Solipsistic Coma 2021 21 x 13 x 3 inches. I've returned to employing a laser again in this piece. (Not since *Self Portrait of the Artist in Perpetual Maintenance* ...way back in 1988.) This is the only sculpture I've ever programmed with 'intelligence'. A blue, laser-illuminated synthetic opal globe awakens and changes pulse and brightness — warming (slowing) to an approaching viewer, and beaconing to the timid by pulsing faster. A sliced meteorite inscribed with patterns grown over millions of years becomes the boilerplate text we can only guess the meaning of. Video on the next page. (cont.)



In keeping with the theme of this exhibition of questioning and addressing reality: Solipsism is the philosophy of a single mind. It is the belief that everything stems from and is contained in the self. (Yes, another chamber here.) Am I creating all that is? Maybe it is you who are. Or is that just a misguided belief and can one awaken from such a coma? I've visited this idea several times. *I Think but What am I?* 1990, supports a similar viewpoint.

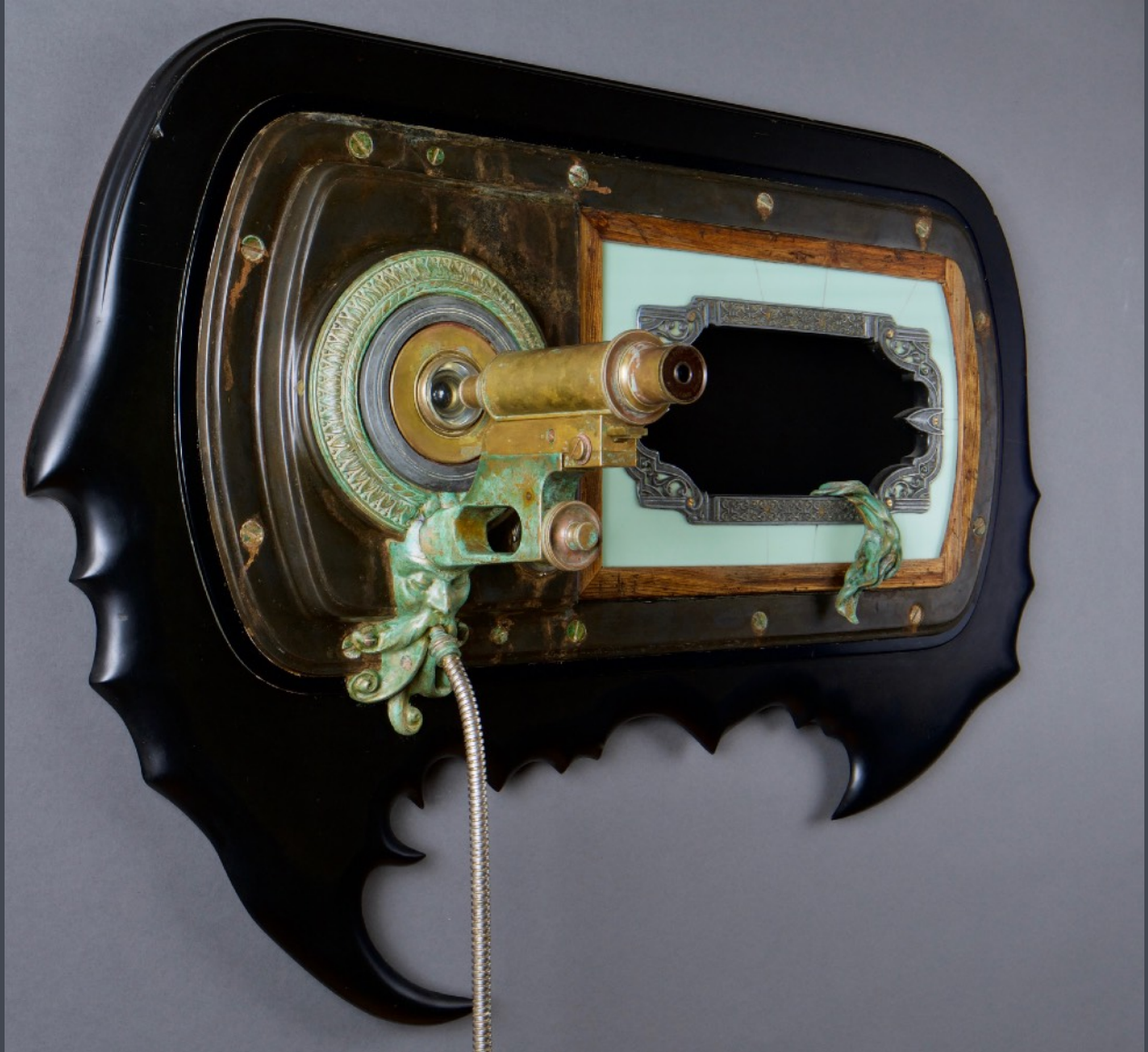




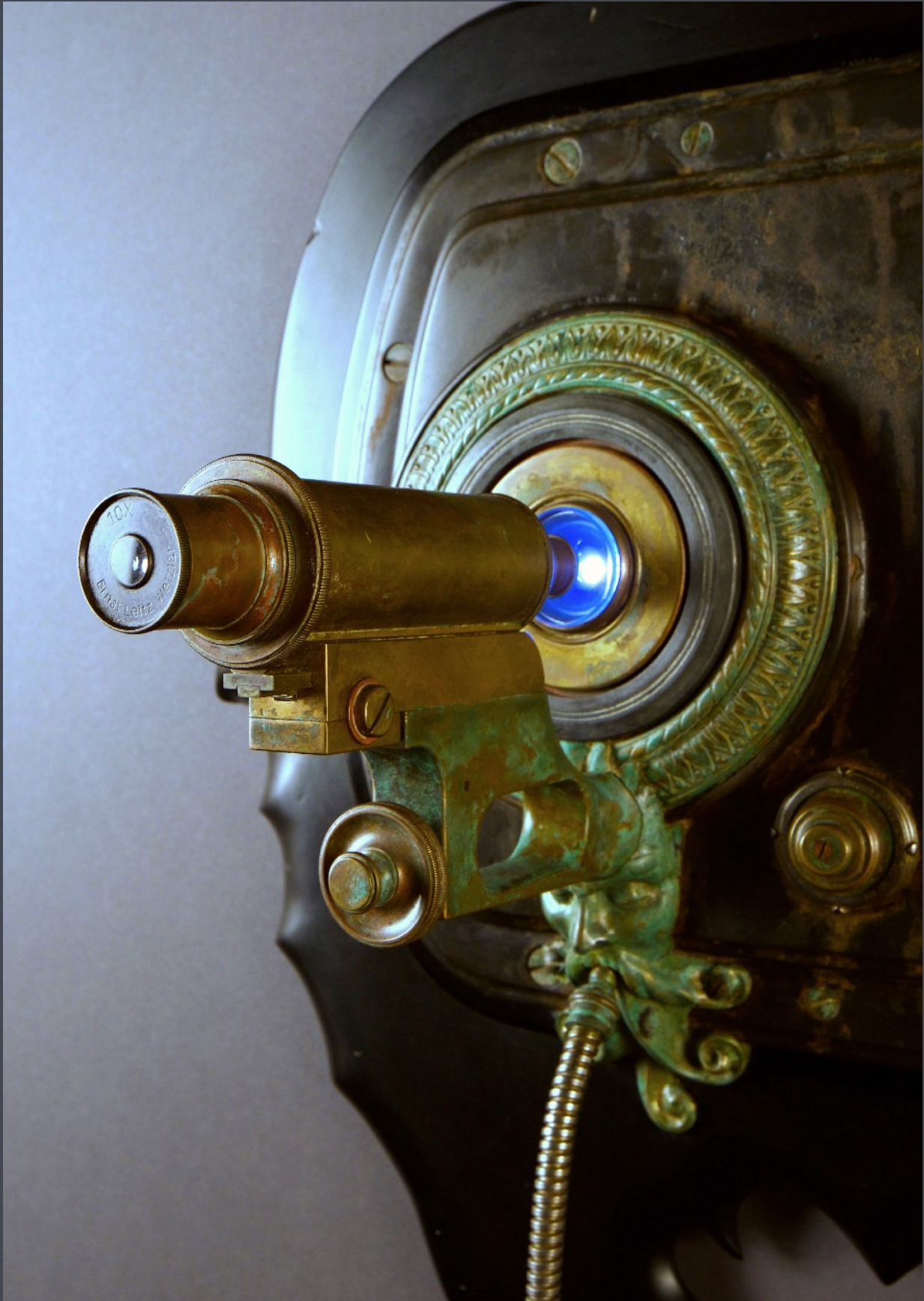


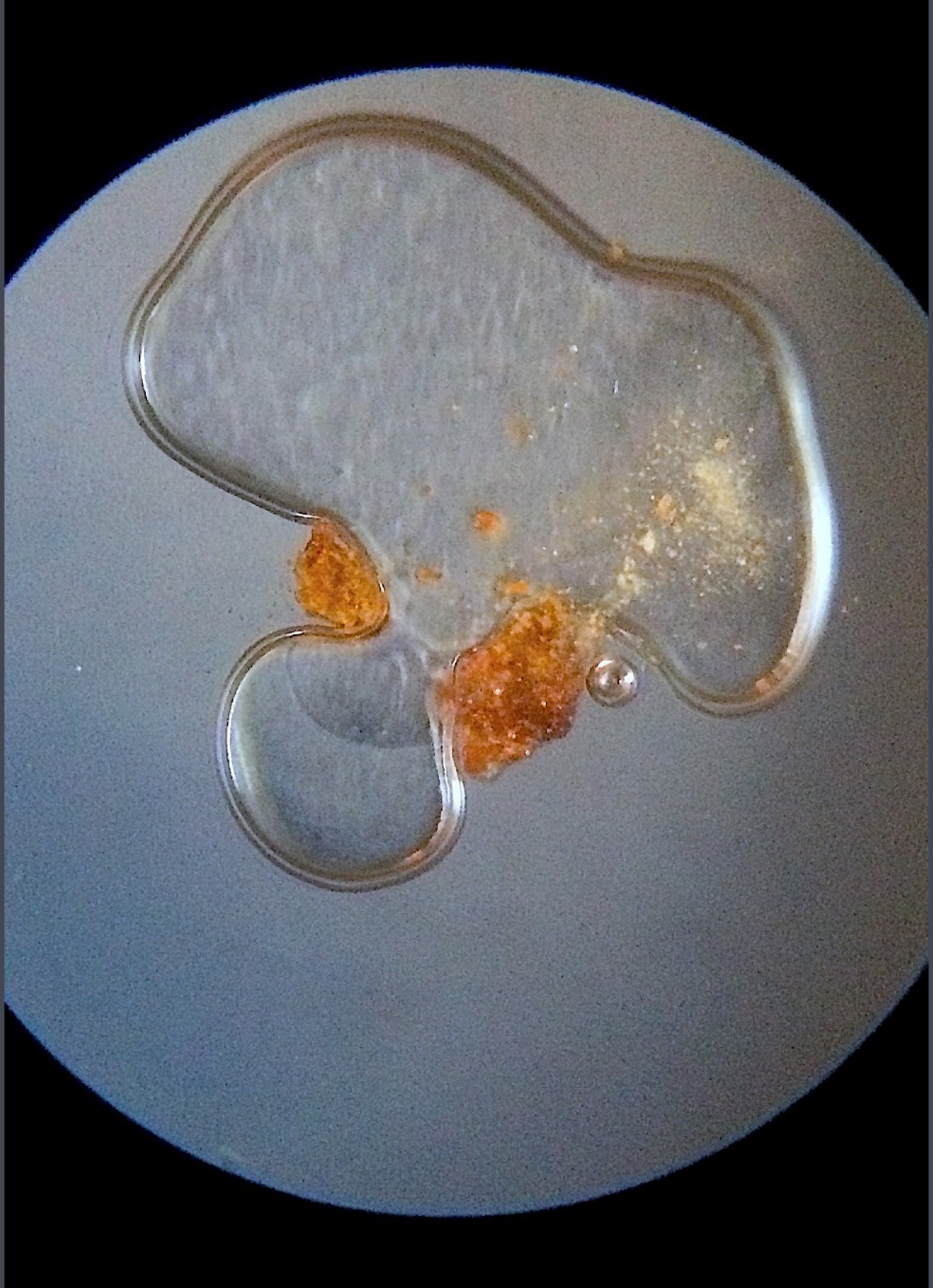


The Hadean Eon 2016 21 x 30 x 10 inches. The meteor in the previous piece is indeed older than anything on Earth, even the oldest mineral known to man; a granule of which, (seen magnified further below), is under the microscope emanating from this one. All light nearly disappears into the large opening of this sculpture. (If not for Anish Kapoor, it would completely disappear.)



From nothing come all things. Thoughts, sounds, even matter as some theorize. The little bronze curtain has dropped revealing this nothing, and the microscope gives us Earth's oldest something. God, or The Universe, or Consciousness or Bronze Door Knocker Object, whatever you call it, is slurping power from the 110 volt electric outlet to expose these revelations.







That Which is Within You 2014 12 x 28 x 4 inches. Private collection. Made for a friend whose home was destroyed in a fire. The pile of melted coins were one of the few remains. The Aramaic words engraved in granite are some of the more reasonable (Gnostic) teachings attributed to Jesus. Fodder for contemplation, not gospel. Again I invite you to click for a translation and more.

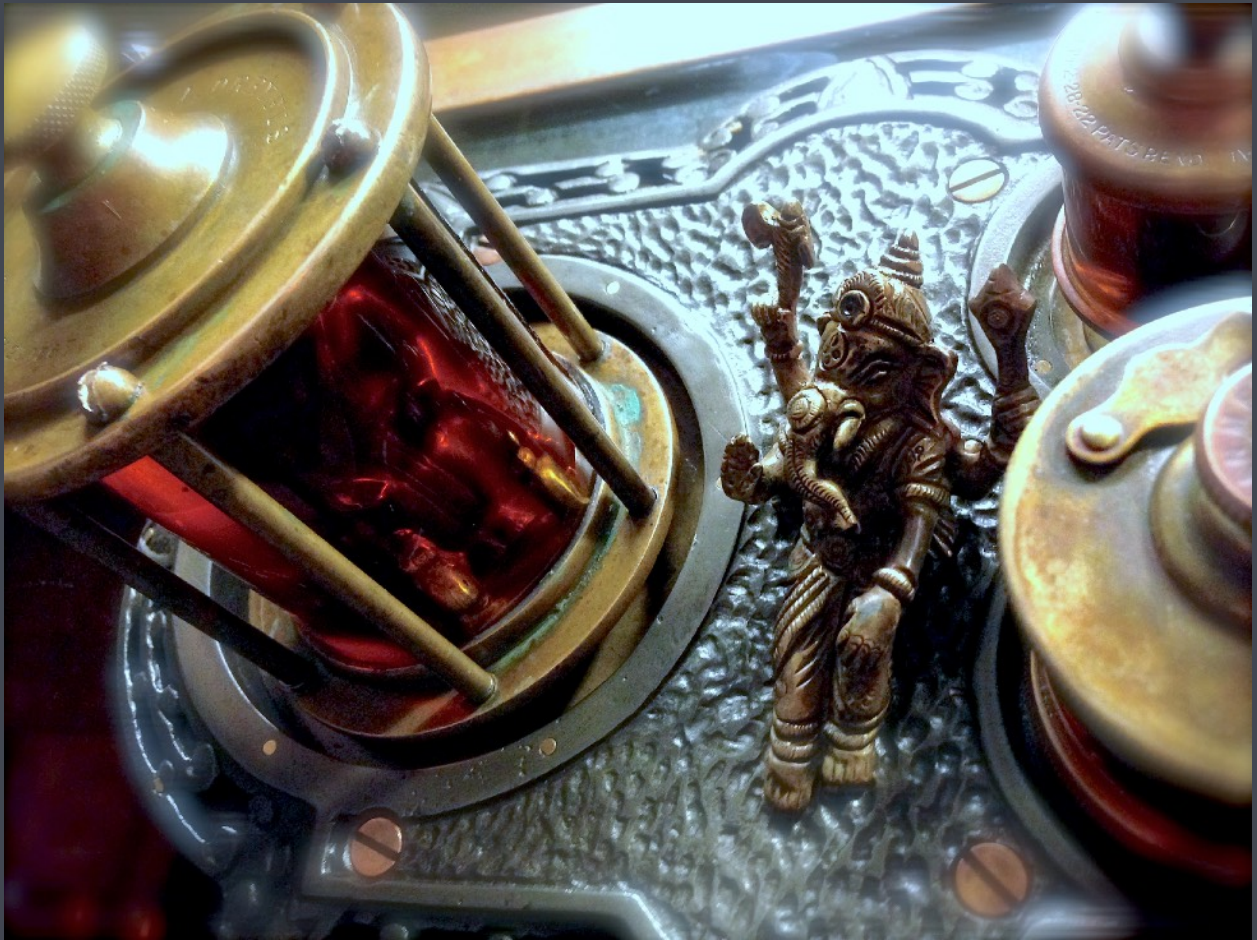




Losing everything can be an opening for new clarity, like the exhale of a heartache kept inside so long when it's finally released. I've employed the form of a classic monument here in the same way I use tools and machines, etc. as representations elsewhere.

The Esoteric Dharma (Descent of the Bodhisattva into the Sea of Consciousness) 2014 16 x 36 x 8 inches. Much of my work borrows from spiritual traditions without necessarily advocating them. Buddha may appear for his wisdom, and Ganesh may as well; if not also for his ultra surreal steeze. Everything is a character in this play of symbolic objects; dark, light, sweet, sour, full of red holy oil.





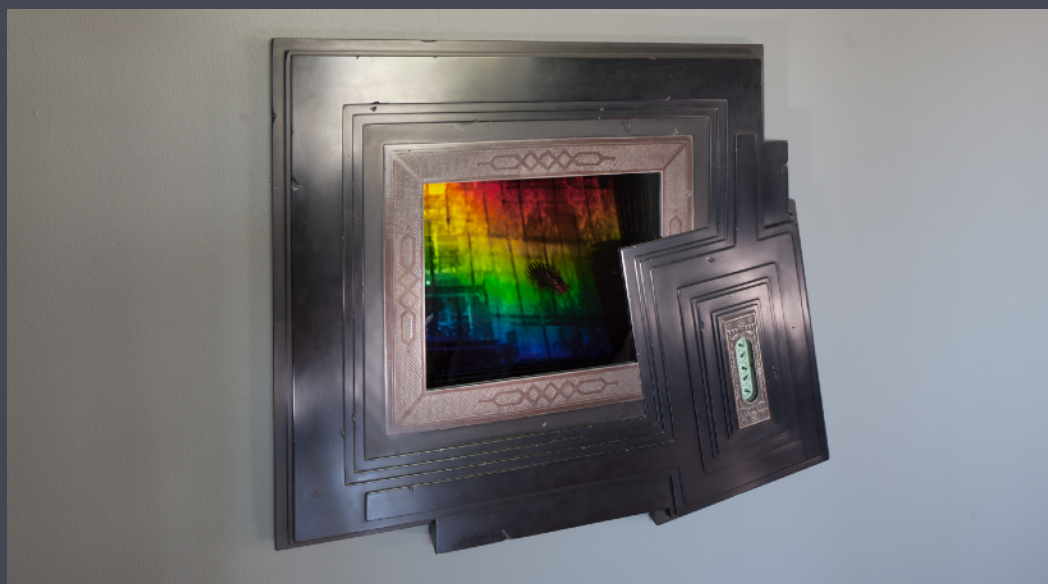


Additional work

The following pieces and some studies may be included depending on availability and space. Click any picture to link to more info. Drawings can also be exhibited if a separate space is available. I just happen to have this [video](#) of some of these sculptures.



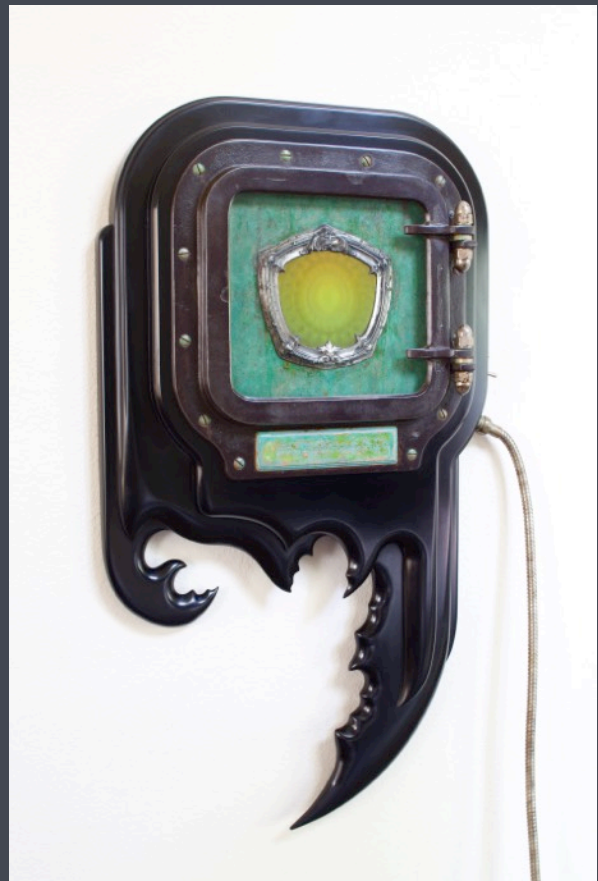
The Dark Glass 2010 18 x 65 x 6 inches. Private collection



*Scrying the Present in the Shadow of a Doubt
(The Beetle of Sulawesi)* 2010 29 x 34 x 3 inches. Collection of the city of Houston



Abhaya Mudra Lila of the Wat Pho Buddha
2012 29 x 11 x 5 inches Collection of the Art
Museum of Southeast Texas



Hierophantic Aperture (Samsara) 2011
34 x 20 x 3 inches. Private collection

Installation

The architectural nature of the work calls for breathing room. Charcoal colored walls and focused lighting, kept dark around the art would be optimal. Work would be positioned to complete the feel of a shrine. Artworks will take on purpose the same way tabernacles, alters and sacred objects might.

Sound

Psylobison is an experimental ambient music project developed by Brudniak over a number of years with co-creator Gerry Diaz which has a direct correlation to the work in the show. Music from the yet unreleased album *Trancedelica* will play at a low level from a hidden system. Listen [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#). Psylobison is available for performances in a setting suitably related to the gallery.

Contact

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Links

Website stevebrudniak.com

Steve Brudniak [CV](#)

Steve Brudniak [Bio/About](#)

Wikipedia [Brudniak](#)

Instagram [Brudniak](#)

The Science of Surrealism - Assemblage Sculpture of Steve Brudniak [Book](#)

Steve Brudniak: Back from Samsara [Exhibit Video](#)

Steve Brudniak: Noumenon [Exhibit Video](#) Galveston Art Center

Steve Brudniak: Noumenon [Exhibit Video](#) Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum

3 Kinetic Brudniak Sculptures [Exhibit Video](#) Southwest School of Art

In the Wake of the Exodus Toward the Breach in the Gate [Artwork Video](#) with Psylobison

Solipsistic Coma [Artwork Video](#) with Psylobison

Ulteriaphobia - 1995 Brudniak [Documentary](#)

Noumenon - 2006 Brudniak [Documentary](#)

Actor Website stevebrudniakactor.com

IMDb [Steve Brudniak](#)

All photos by Jess Hardcastle Beal and the artist [JH Hardcastle Studio](#)

Click any image on this proposal to link to it on the [website](#) for more info, videos and photographs.