

## Categories of Work

The works of Jack Wise are included in major art collections, including those of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Canada Council Art Bank, The Smithsonian Institute, Scottish Art Council, and several university collections across Canada. Wise's painting is marked by his attention to detail, repetition of form, and his concentration on universal themes, such as imagery of circles, rocks and dragons. Dragons, for example, are part of both Celtic and Chinese beliefs. In this way, Wise hoped to emphasize imagery with meaning to everyone, regardless of their background or religion (Andrew Scott, "Wise," 22).

Wise worked in the distinctive forms of calligraphy, and circular mandalas. He once said, "The mandala is my discipline and the calligraphy is my freedom. They are both part of the totality that has intrigued me now for a long, long time." (Rimmer) Although he practised calligraphy as a separate exercise and his free-form brush work was visually quite different from the intricacy and discipline of his brightly coloured mandalas, he incorporated calligraphy within his mandalas.

He felt a deep connection with Asian philosophy, especially Taoist beliefs, but did not limit himself to themes of that nature. Buddha Thoughts incorporates Asian themes, but The Rosy Crucifixion, part of the Maltwood Collection at the University of Victoria, is a representation of the Christian cross. By presenting art of cross-cultural significance, Wise successfully crossed boundaries and brought diverse cultural traditions together through his art.

# Mandalas

Jack Wise stepped away from his art to pursue a life as a homesteader in British Columbia in the early 1960s. He was unable to stay away from painting for long, but he returned to his art with a different approach. It was the form of the circle that emerged and persistently appeared to him to guide his work ([Rimmer, Language of the Brush](#)). Wise began to recognize the importance of the circle, as a shape, a symbol, and an icon or devotional image.

Wise originally approached this circular theme spontaneously. He reveals that, in these early paintings, he was not fully aware of their meaning, but that "the circle was insistent" ([Rimmer, Language of the Brush](#)). After reading and visits to Northern India and Tibet, Wise learned of the spiritual importance of the circular mandala, particularly in the Buddhist faith.

Mandalas are images created from concentric circles and geometric shapes that contain other images or diagrams within them, systematically arranged so that they may act as a picture with lessons and meanings. The mandala has developed as part of the religion of Buddhism, which originated in India and is now practiced in a variety of forms by many people in China, Japan and Tibet, as well as in Canada and throughout the world.

Meditation is an aspect of Buddhist practice, and the mandala form is often used to assist in focusing the attention needed to enter a meditative state. The round mandala can help Buddhists concentrate, it can remind them of the Enlightenment they are seeking and the deeds of Buddha, and it can aid them as they contemplate lessons and teachings. The mandala has other interpretations that do not replace these other roles, but rather add to them.

The mandalas created by Buddhist monks and scholars from sand, paint, sculpted and coloured vegetable butter, flowers, fabric and even architecture represent their efforts to unite with the cosmic nature of Buddha. The voyage people take through the mandala as they look carefully at all of its layers has been compared to the actions of pilgrims (U. Mammitzsch, [Evolution of the Garbhadhatu Mandala](#), New Delhi 1991, 20.), who physically visit temples and important Buddhist sites and walk around them in a series of ever-shortening circles, representing their journey towards Buddha and Enlightenment at the centre or top. Jack Wise lost himself in his mandalas as he painted them, the same way that many of the people who look at his paintings are captured by the power of these iconic circles. He spoke of this feeling and his wish that everyone could experience it. "It is such a relief to be out of one's own skin in meditation. Whenever I'm totally lost in a painting, through one hundred percent attention I don't exist. I'm simply not there ... it's wonderful." ([Rimmer, Language of the Brush](#)).

Wise worked with a tiny brush and sat very close to pre-cut circles of paper as he created his detailed mandalas. The mandalas are among his most popular works, and include many paintings called, simply, Untitled or Mandala. Rainbow Mandala, painted in 1968, incorporates miniature landscapes, geometric shapes and free form brush work into the larger mandala, almost like a patchwork quilt. Some of Wise's other mandalas work with images found in Tibetan Buddhist art, employing rich, vibrant reds, yellows, blues, blacks and greens to depict Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. Others use concentric circles, setting rings of his calligraphic brush work within each other, moving towards a pearl at the very centre.

Wise painted the mandalas in a concentrated and meditative state, and without diminishing any of their universal significance, he found them to be a very personal form. He felt great guilt over selling these pieces, for he felt that they should be given rather than exchanged for money.

# Calligraphy

Jack Wise often used a technique of paint application resembling Chinese calligraphy. The strokes of the brush in calligraphy use the contrasting qualities of thick and thin, fast and slow, wet and dry, which Wise found pleasing to the eye. His work displays this use of calligraphy in free form brush work, where he uses black on a white background. It is also seen in paintings, such as *Sword in Stone* completed in 1974, that use strokes of the brush to create forms that strongly resemble fields of calligraphic shapes, and in the undulating patterns found within his mandalas.

Calligraphy was present in China from ancient times and brought to Japan in the 8th Century C.E.. There are traditions of calligraphy, or 'beautiful writing' in many written languages. However, the Chinese tradition is not simply writing, but the creation of the actual physical form of the word. The brush method and the structure of the characters are the key components of Chinese calligraphy, and the subtle, continuous lifting and lowering movements of the brush require confidence, concentration and focus. Mastery takes years of practice and concentration, often through study with a master calligrapher. Although Western artists most commonly adopted Japanese calligraphy, Wise studied Chinese calligraphy.

Wise would start every morning with non-character calligraphy exercises in black and white, to get his "brush hand moving". He had been engaging in brush stroke work for years when he met Lin Chien Shih, who, upon immigrating to Canada from China, found Wise to be a talented student and a true friend.

They spent many hours discussing Chinese philosophy and calligraphy together, and Lin Chien Shih found poetic words to describe Wise's calligraphic style in the catalogue from the show *Jack Wise: A Decade of Work*. These descriptive words convey not only the calligraphy on the page, but also the dance of the brush as it twists, glides, hovers and turns in the artist's trained hand:

*Looking at his work, sometimes it is like a dancer's sash fluttering in the wind, sometimes like a giant boulder falling off a high precipice, sometimes it is like a small ripple caressing the surface of a lake, and at others like a tidal wave ripping the ocean apart.*

Wise applied his calligraphic style to his personal response to the West Coast rainforest, creating a combination of natural and mystical imagery. Friend Stephen Cummings wrote Jack a letter during his years on Texada Island in which he compared the calligraphic strokes in a painting called *Greenfield* to the lichen growing on the trees outside his studio ("*Jack Wise: A Personal View*", *The Art of Jack Wise*, 1999).

In 1969, poet Peter Trower published a limited run of his poetry called *Moving Through the Mystery* (Talonbooks, Vancouver B.C.), with illustrations by Jack Wise. Wise wrote of his first experience illustrating poetry: "Peter Trower's poetry at its best celebrates life and its mystery. I'm grateful to be able to add a visual footnote to some of his evocative insights." (ibid.) All of these illustrations have been printed in black and white, and rely on the linear quality of calligraphy. *Moving Through The Mystery*, which illustrates the title poem, involves flame-like forms rising up, shimmering and vibrating. It embodies the old Chinese saying on calligraphy: "You paint the black to reveal the white." *Ghost Story* and *The Sea Runs Diagonally* are two other illustrations from the book. The surfaces of Jack Wise's paintings are energized by the brush strokes that created them. For Wise, this was the ultimate truth of his calligraphy. He said, "The only language I trust anymore is the language of the brush." (Rimmer)

## Tools of the Artist

A painting is merely the final product of the art of Jack Wise, viewed by people in a gallery, on a wall in their home or even in the database that is part of this web site. His paintings are not just pigment on paper, however, for he has infused each one with his spiritual, psychological, mathematical and environmental studies and observations. These efforts are coupled with his choices of brushes and paints, which he often made himself, for part of the process of creating vibrant and intriguing mandalas, calligraphy and free-form work involves the special tools and materials used by the artist.

Jack Wise experimented with all kinds of media, the equipment and supplies needed to create his art. Each type of paint, every brush, and all the many things within his studio were part of his unique style. South Asian carpets and fabrics surrounded Wise in his studio, as he worked seated in a meditative posture. When practising calligraphy, he would dip his chosen brush into ink, which would then find its way across the topmost sheet of a block of paper, following some graceful and studied movements of his hand. Mandalas were completed on carefully cut circles of white paper. He constructed a special, circular case, made of wood and lined with batting, in which to carry these works in progress.

Lists of some of the thousands of pieces he completed during his time in British Columbia show that he used sumi and Chinese inks, graphite, silver, gilt and pearls, and watercolour, tempera and oil paints. He sculpted marble and produced relief woodcut and intaglio prints. He painted on linen, paper and rocks, and many of his works contained combinations of many different materials, in what is known as "mixed media".

The greatest number of Wise's paintings were done in gouache, an opaque, water-based pigment with a gluey thickener. This was his favourite medium, and the one that friend George Woodcock considered to be his best (George Woodcock, *ArtsCanada Winter 1975-6*, 10). Gouache allowed Wise to achieve his distinctive blend of calligraphic strokes with rich colour, especially in his mandala pieces, as oil paints are much thicker and weightier and watercolours more pale and subtle. Not all of his works used what would be considered paints. He experimented with ink made from mushrooms, that Stephen Cummings recalls later sprouted inside framed drawings (Stephen Cummings, "Jack Wise: A Personal View", *Art Gallery of Greater Victoria*, 1999, 12).

Brushes, the cherished tools of all calligraphers, were valued in Wise's studio. He explored the nuances of all of his brushes, gathering intimate knowledge about how each one responded to the movement of his hands, the paper and the inks and paints. He kept many brushes, noting that each had "a unique singular voice" (Rimmer). Wise continued this musical analogy, speaking of his brushes as musical instruments and his paintings as musical compositions. He explained to many people that, "sounds very often in my mind are forms or colours".

Diane Carr, a friend of both artists, spoke of Chien-Shih's frustration with Jack's love of fine brushes. *Jack really liked good brushes, and both Jack and Chien-Shih were absolutely poor as church mice. Jack bought \$150 brushes, and Chien-Shih was absolutely horrified, almost angry. He then went and got his dollar fifty brush and told him, "Don't buy expensive brushes. It doesn't improve your work any."* (interviewed by Angela Andersen, 03/01)

Wise often used a brush he had crafted out of cedar bark for his calligraphy, but a favourite was given as a gift from his friend and teacher Lin Chien Shih. Bristled with cougar hair, it had belonged to Lin Chien Shih's own teacher in China. With such tools, the artist could experience "this wonderful surge of the brush having danced something quite wonderful." Wise made the comment that, with the proper attention, "the brush will tell its own story." (Ibid.)

## On Jack Wise

Jack Wise is respected by so many people, as an artist and as a person. He was friend and teacher to other artists, and to those who were drawn to his unique form of expression. Many continue to create art, inspired by his teaching, meditate on his paintings, and pursue research on his life and work to share with others. This section contains materials from interviews with the people who knew Jack and wished to share their thoughts.

### Diane Carr

*Diane Carr has had a great involvement in the arts, among other things establishing the Canadian Craft Museum in Vancouver and running the Potter's Wheel, one of the first Canadian galleries to show pottery and ceramics as fine art. Pots are art! She knew Jack and Lin Chien-Shih and admired their work and its role in bridging East and West. (interviewed by Angela Andersen, Victoria, B.C., March 2001)*

#### **How did you know Jack?**

When I came back from university in Oregon, where I was given a very different concept of what art is all about than perhaps might have happened here, I wound up running the Potter's Wheel. Perhaps it was a very Asian way of looking at things, presenting ceramics as art. I had an exhibition of a young artist from England and Jack happened to come, and as a result he and I became friends.

You almost can't talk about Jack without talking about Chien-Shih. They're inseparable, really. Chien-Shih got him to move to Calgary. Chien-Shih did the Ba Chih, the Taoist form of telling fortune, so Chien-Shih would direct all of our lives by Ba Chih. He wanted everybody to move to Calgary. Well, he got Jack there for a while, teaching. I think it was a great distress that Jack didn't stay there, to Jack, to Chien-Shih and to a lot of friends and students. If Jack could claim to be influenced by anybody, it was Chien-Shih, because he had the discipline and the philosophy; he talked about the requirements of discipline. Freedom from discipline is the Oriental way - I remember Jack saying that. From freedom comes discipline. I think if you don't say anything else about Jack, that's really central.

#### **He has had an effect on so many people. Do you think that his work will continue to have an impact?**

You'd have to predict what was going to happen to people's consciousness and I think that's really difficult to do. There will always be people who have that interest in Eastern Philosophy and who find a strong connection through Jack's work, and through Chien-Shih's and Mark Tobey's. I think that looking at the three of them together could perhaps add more. There have been not that many people who have tried to bridge culture the way that those men did. Perhaps the more that we do become aligned with the East, they will be seen as forerunners of whatever art comes out of that. Art has to do with what's happening at the time that things are being painted. At the time that we all started to get interested in Chien-Shih and Jack, there was a whole thing happening with a recognition of the East. Perhaps there will always be people who seek that anyway, and this art will speak to them.

**Do you feel you can get a sense of who Jack was through his art?**

If you think of the artist as a tool that the creative force comes through, no matter what tool you use, it effects the work that's done. Depending on the kind of brush, you can see it in the brush stroke. There is a concept called "mu ga" in Japan. "It is not I who is doing it." It is part of the holistic act, not two forces working. I remember Jack saying this, "And then, after a long attention, the artist leans back, and re-creates duality." Isn't that lovely? So you've got this absolute, single focus attention, where you get out of the way. There is no painter.

**In terms of your interest in his work, what is your favourite piece, or one that moved you the most?**

I happen to own my favourite piece, Year of the Horse: "Painted in the ochre of earth reds and greys of primitive Indian art." The first I ever saw of Jack's work was an article in the Sun, when he maybe had his first exhibition out in the Kootenays. This is back in the 60s. That was when he started using brush stroke to form pictures, but they were really words. So you could actually see the mountains.

The last piece Jack did, which he showed us, it's a yellow mandala. I just realized this, but when I visited Chien-Shih for the last time, he took me to his studio and showed me what he was working on, and he drew out what he needed to do before he died. His final works were also yellow. I don't know the meaning of that, but they both finished with yellow works. Chien-Shih hadn't done any kind of major use of yellow up to that point, till those last works, but some. These final works are just almost a celebration of yellow.

**What do you think he would think of having his work posted on the internet?**

Oh, I think Jack would think that was terrific. He liked to have his work out. As far as I know, Jack never had a retrospective of his work, a really major retrospective. The one they did at the art gallery [Victoria] a couple of years ago was a very nice exhibition, but it wasn't thorough enough. It didn't go back. I know for sure that Chien-Shih would have loved seeing his work up on the internet. He really loved technology and using what was there. He figured everything that got created, it was for a purpose. I never saw him turn up his nose at anything.

**What do you think he had more passion towards, his mandala work or his black and white brush work?**

It was all brush work, all of it. I think he would call his black and white work his calligraphy, but if you look at his mandalas, they're both calligraphy. So they're not separate. The painting that he had been doing was also a cycle of objectifying what had been going on inside, aesthetically.

So you think they're both part of a process? Yes, and he actually, he said that to me. He talked about when he painted on rocks, he did that to demonstrate that it was a process, that it was about energy. In a way, the painting on rocks is like the Inuit 'sculpt to let out what's already in there', the energy, how it forms, releasing the form. He said about his rock paintings that, "They were to transcend duality of the painter and that being painted. They were not out of control, but a dance between interpenetration between that which is burgeoning and the consciousness that is emerging."

## Bill Porteous

*Bill Porteous is an artist and art teacher in Victoria. He and Jack met in 1974 at a summer workshop put on by the now defunct Northwest Coast Institute of the Arts, and the National Film Board of Canada, and became close friends, sharing a devotion to their art and mutual respect. Bill believes in the place of art in our society, and works diligently to encourage municipal and private support of the arts. (interviewed by Angela Andersen, Victoria, B.C., February 2001)*

**How did you know Jack Wise?** My first meeting with Jack Wise describes the Jack Wise I got to know. Jack Wise was introduced as an artist who would give us an insight into another kind of consciousness about art. So Jack walked in, at first, and assumed a kind of semi-lotus position. He was smoking a Cool cigarette and he had been drinking a lot of coffee because he was very speedy. He caught himself, in a sense. He went "inside" and said "O.K., just a second. I'm going to go back outside and come in again." And he walked out the door, and he came back in, and sat there in the full lotus position and did a little bit of yogic breathing and centred himself and then proceeded to talk in a very, very Gandolfian type of demeanour.

That, in a sense, reflects the Jack Wise that I knew. On the one hand, probably I haven't met as dedicated an artist, in some ways. Jack was devoted to his work and to the idea that art was transcendent and not purely of this earth and that in order for someone to paint that, one had to become it. So that was the "highest Jack." That's the Jack we all loved and respected. The Jack I knew was that Jack and was my friend, and he was also a person who suffered from having to live up to that image of himself. I think I would be remiss if I didn't say that also Jack was human, and he needed friendship and he needed compassion as a human being, not as someone who was purely living in the light, so to speak. I think Jack should be given a lot of credit for the fact that he was true to his work. His work was not about pictures, it derived from his state of consciousness. In fact, I think I remember this correctly: Jack said he thought an art work was no better or worse than the state of consciousness of the artist at the time they were producing it.

**Do you think you can get a sense of the person that he was through his art?** Well, which person are we speaking of? The Jack that smoked Cools? The Jack that had a difficult time in the world, and with responsibility, that everyone has, or the Jack that painted at the tip of the brush? Which Jack? So I think that although it may be interesting for people to know that Jack wasn't perfect, or that he did these things, I don't know what that has to do with the art, in one sense. Is Jack's art only interesting because he was interested in spirituality, and in Zen Buddhism or Tibetan Tankas? What if you didn't know anything about Jack and you looked at one of his paintings? Would it move you?

When he went to Tibet, apparently he asked them, "How do I paint mandalas?" And according to what I recall Jack told me, he said, "Go home and paint them." So that's what he did. When he came back, that's what he did. The work is what this is about. If Jack really was about telling stories or convincing people to be transcendent, he would have chosen another medium. His work is pure, in my mind. There is no question that Jack was at his highest self when he was painting. So you could say in spite of his perhaps difficult life, he was able to transcend the worldly condition we all share and work in a pure form when he did his work, and I think that's to be celebrated.

**What do you think he would think of having his work posted on the internet in this way?** If I was to base my opinion of that on what he had done, I'd say he might enjoy it, because he had posters made of his work. The Love Mandala poster - he had one up in his studio, he gave me one. So that's a reproduction. There are still silk screen t-shirts around that he did.

**What do you think he was more passionate about: his brush work or his mandala work?** Jack's passion had many facets. On the one hand, he appeared to be almost sage-like, or very Zen-like. On the other hand, he was very intellectual, very analytical. He had a pretty sharp mind, and I think that's his western side, the critical intellect. His criteria for art became inward, like inner vision, and deeply rooted in Eastern mysticism. So Jack, I think, was attracted to mandala because it was concrete, it had an intellectual construct, epistemological structure: it was strict. Black and white was the purest form. There's nowhere to hide. It's like an electrocardiogram of your consciousness. I think Jack found in calligraphy a way to be a Dragon, to be this powerful, mythical force, and at the same time to be vulnerable and to be high minded, to be pure in intention and in action. He greatly admired Lin Chien-Shih. Jack said, in essence, that Lin Chien-Shih was his mentor, and he and Chien-Shih shared a dream, that he and Jack would meet in another life in caves in China to do calligraphy. Chien-Shih made Jack a stamp once, and Jack was very proud of this stamp - a chop. Jack only put it on special works, and the chop said the equivalent, in English, "No use to use". This is a useless work. This is a useless object, there is no value in it, other than its aesthetic value or its spiritual value. So if Jack thought you really did something special, calligraphic or otherwise, he'd put this chop on it that said "No use to use".

**What is your favourite piece that he did, or one that moves you the most?** There is a painting, that I can't say that I know the name of it - it's a mandala. I observed him over a period of weeks, painting it. So I went through, I talked to him about it, I saw it in progress and he shared with me some of the things he was doing about it, so the reason why it would appeal to me, maybe, the most is that I saw Jack struggling, and going through what we all go through when we make art. We used to share materials, and we traded artwork. I have some original Jack Wise paintings that he gave me, because I liked them. Lin Chien-Shih told Jack and myself, "You should give your best work away."

## Lorne Loomer

*Lorne Loomer is a soft-spoken teacher who has continued Jack's brush work classes at the Metchosin International Summer School of the Arts (MISSA). Lorne began as a student and became one of many who admired Jack's artistic expression and powerful, almost wordless teaching style. (interviewed by Angela Andersen, Metchosin, B.C., February 2001)*

He's a very difficult person to describe. I don't think I can describe him in words. I have been teaching Jack's course that he taught at the Metchosin Summer School for 10 years. In that week's workshop, I try to pass on what Jack had taught us in that way, because Jack goes beyond language. He didn't say much.

People have claimed to have known him and had a wonderful conversation with him. Well, what did he say? They reply, "Well, not much. Jack and I had the most wonderful conversation, but Jack didn't say anything." Jack goes beyond words, in my opinion, so I really couldn't say anything [about him]. He was a very powerful person, and he did much of that without speaking. He had several chops (a type of stamp, carved in the Chinese tradition), and the biggest chop, which was a privilege to get on your work, said "teaching without words". I was very lucky to be in one class on mandala painting. In 40 years of teaching, he just taught it that once.

He was very sick, and he asked me to show his slides. The faculty at MISSA were obliged to do one evening presentation. I said, "I'll do anything for you, you know that. But you know I don't understand it." He said, "You know, I don't understand it either, Lorne, just show the slides." All those intricate mandalas are super-human in their fineness. He didn't know either where it came from. He called it "A postcard from another place".

People from his courses carry a little bit of Jack around with them. It's not anything we can describe, we can just feel it. I think for all of us, young and old, who have been students of his, some aspect of it is always there. The last time I saw him, I looked at him, we held hands and smiled - we never spoke. I knew he was unwell on Denman, but you couldn't tell - he sounded manly and deep on the phone. The last time we spoke, I fumbled for words to let him know I was sorry about his condition. He said, "Don't worry, Lorne, it's O.K. I'll be with you at the point of the brush."

The course I teach is about the things I felt about him. I took his course for 4 years. It's easy to remember what he said, because we only talked two times in those classes in four years. The message is still very indelible and very clear because it's a very simple story. For those of us who loved him, he had a lot of insights after a lifetime, but he never put them out there as a grand thing, just in the way of the midwestern farmer that he was.

## Madeleine Shields

*Madeleine Shields is a talented artist and private art teacher. She is the founder and former director of the Single Parent Resource Centre in Victoria. Madeleine became a student of Jack's, studying and later instructing mandala painting. (Interview by Angela Andersen, February, 2001, Victoria B.C.)*

### **How did you come to know Jack Wise?**

It was one of the last years of the 70s when I went to the Victoria College of Art. Jack was teaching there at the time, and, I must say, he was a wonderful teacher. The work that I did with him really stayed with me. I decided to leave the social work that I had been doing. I went to talk to Jack about it and art came up as being what was calling me. What was particularly interesting was Jack's reference to the mandala. He spoke to me about it - he called it a "diagram from the inner country". I asked him if he would teach me. He believed that people should do this work when they were around 50, when there was a certain evolution in our personalities, when we mature in a certain way. I was 48 [laughter], so he made a little concession, and agreed to teach me. When I went to work with him on the mandala, I had no preconception at all of what it was that we were going to be doing. But, of course, he spoke a great deal as we were going along. Jack was so articulate, and I loved asking him questions so, as I went along I learned more about what I was doing, so it was a very exciting first experience with him.

He was very well educated. He had a wonderful mind, he really did. He was an extraordinary human being. I really miss him. Talking about him makes me realize how much I miss him. He was special. He had a great sense of humour. I really learned a lot from Jack and I thoroughly enjoyed talking with him. He was so interesting and he had a wonderful vocabulary. He would often say words that I had never heard before, which would, of course, drive me into the dictionary. I don't know whether everybody felt about him as I did. I do recall once having him come to meet two of my students. I remember one of the women didn't take to him at all. The one was thrilled and he engaged with her and praised her work, but the other gal, she just didn't get him- there wasn't any kind of a connection. I guess it's always personal.

With Jack, he was wonderfully careful about what he said. He would not be critical, if he could help it. In my first mandala, I had gotten caught painting the narrative ring, which is where the images come up. I started to rely on my intention, meaning that I was intending and wanting certain things to happen and I started painting out of that space. And as soon as Jack saw it, he made a comment, but it wasn't hurtful. I remember that very vividly, because it would have been easy to hurt me. He was telling me that what I had done wasn't very close to the place that he was acquainting me with. I ended up not only totally removing that and whatever other panels I had done that were out of that place but they got replaced by something that was totally different, and it was a really important lesson for me, but I remember never feeling offended. Sometimes it was funny. Sometimes it was a bit sarcastic, but it was never hurtful.

### **Do you think it is possible to get a sense of who Jack Wise was by looking at his art?**

It's what's in the person when they are doing the work. They are the ones who sense that. I think the art was transcendent in that it's the way he believed in it. He had such a regard for what he did. And, of course, the Chinese calligraphy, which was a big part of his work, that's a very powerful medium. I spent a winter learning calligraphy from Jack, and I was really startled at how much you can take from your inner self and put into a stroke. But it has to be done intentionally, and, of course, that's what Jack did.

**What do you think he would think of having his work posted on the internet?**

I think he would probably be glad. He was an artist for so many years, and he had so many showings of his art. He never kept it to himself and he sold a lot of his art to people.

**What piece is your favourite? Or the one that moves you the most?**

I remembered the mandala that he worked on while I was working with him because I was in the studio and saw it evolve, and I loved it when it was finished.

**What were his political beliefs?**

When I met him I don't think I ever heard him talk about political things. There's a mandala that he did that had images in the narrative ring that he said were all about war, and it must have been at a period when he was very interested in what was happening, but I don't even know what period it was. In his case, you see, he might have just been reflecting on war in general and the effect on humanity.

**As an artist, do you feel he has a continuing influence for the artistic community here on the west coast?**

There are so many artists here and I think his work could tend to get swallowed up and forgotten. I think in the art community it's very easy to get lost, but people like me definitely remember Jack, and I'm continuing the work he taught me and I share it with other people, and that's really a quieter way he'll be remembered, I think.

## Nicholas Tuele

*Nicholas Tuele became closely involved with Jack Wise and his work. As the former Chief Curator of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, he was responsible for the retrospective exhibition of Jack Wise's work "Karma of the Dragon: The Art of Jack Wise" and the accompanying exhibition catalogue. (interviewed by Angela Andersen, Victoria, B.C., February 2001)*

### **Is it possible for viewers of Jack's work to find a sense of who he was, or did he completely transcend himself?**

It is possible for viewers to find a sense of the artist, particularly in the Mandala paintings, but they require an extraordinary amount of decoding that has not yet been accomplished. I believe that any of the works, which he produced as a series, were sustained meditations that exemplify his extraordinarily rich and complex artistic sensibility

### **What do you think the lasting impact of his work will be?**

I have a sense that in the next few decades more and more people including both scholars and the general public will find the kind of work that Jack Wise produced of very special import. There are already had number of artists who work in a similar vein and this will surely produced a resonance down through the ages. Jack Wise belongs in a tradition of artists in the Pacific Northwest who share at fascination for the philosophies of the Orient. Artists like Mark Tobey, Callaghan, and others form a "school" that has been described in the exhibition catalogue that the gallery [Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Victoria B.C.] produced for the major survey of Wise's work.

### **There is very little information on his personal politics and participation in what could be called organized religion (though certainly a strong sense of spirituality). What are your thoughts on this?**

Jack abhorred organized religion of the Western world but had a deep and abiding relationship to Buddhism, particularly Tibetan Buddhism. His strong sense of spirituality is evidenced in his daily life and in his work as an artist.

### **What is the piece that moves you the most that he created?**

I find the major Mandala paintings to be particularly impressive and challenging. I have started a project to try and relate aspects of the artist biography to the particular Mandala paintings made in any given year. I am also particularly struck by the abstractions such as Brownian Movement. The artist was an extremely knowledgeable individual about particle physics and quantum mechanics. Many of abstractions were meditations on the nature of reality at the subatomic level.

### **Was his Mandala work a culmination of his various artistic, personal, spiritual and professional endeavours throughout his life or did they spring from a specific point in time/place/experience?**

The Mandala paintings were his major preoccupation and stand as the most important body of work that he produced. I recall that he once told me he made at least one a year for more than 25 years. These paintings are not mandalas in the traditional sense of the word but are rather intensely personal revelations that somehow transcend to the universal.

### **Was he more passionate about his free form calligraphic work or the precise and detailed calligraphy and Mandala work?**

I don't know for sure, but I suspect that both kinds of work went hand-in-hand.

## Robin Hopper

*Robin Hopper is an accomplished ceramic artist living in Metchosin, just outside of Victoria. In 1984, he was instrumental in getting a number of artists together to start an art school in Metchosin called the Metchosin International Summer School of the Arts (MISSA), for professional artists, serious students and teachers, which takes place at Pearson College of the Pacific. He was a colleague of Jack's. (interviewed by Angela Andersen, Metchosin, B.C., February 2001)*

### **How did you know Jack Wise?**

Jack Wise came to the summer school and taught with us for 4 or 6 years, and had a major impact on people's approach to the use of simple imagery with the use of a brush. He was teaching, most of the time, non-character calligraphy. One year, and I think this was the only time he ever taught it, if I can recall, he taught mandala painting.

He had an incredible influence, and he still does. Jack had an amazing effect on all of the students who worked with him and he had an amazing presence - he had spent a lot of time in Tibet and India and he had some of the aura of a guru, in the true sense of guru, through just the fact that he was there - he hardly said anything much to his students. He was a man of very, very few words, and some people found that frustrating. But his "non-words" were immense in the way that people were affected by them. When he was on campus, even when he was sick and on campus, he was still having a major effect by not saying anything. [laughs] A lot of people sort of wanted more in terms of verbal interaction, but they just didn't get it in Jack. But one word might speak volumes. And the way that he sort of qualified the student's work, he would have his chop, which is his mark, his stamp, and it was a great honour to have him put his chop on your work. And so people would be going up to him and he'd be giving them projects and so on.

### **As a potter, do you feel that there was any mutual influence going on?**

Yes. Jack loved my work and I loved his work and we did trade, like most artists tend to trade. I think a lot of potters are very strongly influenced by the Far East. If you look at the three cultures of Japan, China and Korea, in painting and in ceramics, they're both very much intertwined, if you get beyond the visual image and delve into the reasons why, which is a sort of spiritual approach and spiritual involvement with the material. Largely, it's the depth of understanding of what's behind the artwork that you see, whether it's a pot or whether it's a painting. It's that spiritual understanding that the artist has put into it, from his knowledge and learning. It manifests itself in lots of different ways for different people.

### **What do you think that Jack would think of having his work posted on the internet and him being a figure of study?**

Well, I think Jack's a dichotomy. On one hand I think he'd love it and on the other I think he'd hate it. For public view, I would feel that he would want to say "No thanks", but on the other hand, he was also an egotist, like most artists. I think that side of him would have been delighted that people were interested enough in what he did that they were prepared to put it up on a web site, even though he's not here. I think that Jack's work, particularly in the last ten years of his life, was so sublime that he would be very excited.

**Do you think you can get a sense of Jack Wise the person through looking at his art work?**

I think if you're sufficiently receptive, you can. I think that a lot of people would be really excited about seeing Jack's work, through the complexity of it and the interesting relationships between colour and brush stroke and so on - purely from a visual point of view. Then, if they were turned on by the visual, I would think that they would probably want to find out more about it. I don't think that he was ever very well understood, by the public or even artists, except for those people who got into understanding his spirituality about it, and they would find the real Jack, but everybody has got to look for it.

**Do you think that he will be remembered as a significant contributor to art?**

I think he will. It's difficult to say how much and how it will manifest itself. He's one of the first people who'd lived in Canada for an extended period of their lives that got into that sort of East-West understanding. If the East-West activities continue and grow, as they have tended to be doing, I think that Jack will be more and more recognized as a major influence.

**Because of his closeness to Tibet, did he have a reaction to the political situation there?**

Oh, I'm sure that he did, internally, but I don't think it manifested itself externally. Obviously it would have been hurting him greatly internally. He was never, in my experience anyway, one to get involved with the world at large. He was a real dichotomy, a real conundrum as a guy. Jack lived in a shack for the last number of years of his life, on Denman Island. He was found pretty well every day in the café down the street with all his friends and buddies chatting away about things, but I don't know what, because I wasn't there. Like I said, Jack was an internalized person, and I don't feel I got to know him nearly as well as I would have liked to. When he left his life, not that he had much money anyway, he wanted to be in the simplest possible way of a plain board pine box, no fancy handles, no fancy anything on the coffin that was it. He just wanted it to be as close to a Tibetan funeral as he could get it.

## Myken Woods

*Myken Woods was a student of Jack's mentor, Chinese calligrapher Lin Chien-Shih, in Calgary. She knew Jack when he was an artist in residence in Calgary, and later visited him on Denman Island. She has been doing brush art with a calligraphic influence for 20 years. (interviewed by Angela Andersen, Victoria to Calgary, February 2001)*

### **How did you come to know Jack Wise?**

I've been doing brush work for 20 years. I call it brush art, because I'm not Chinese. I studied with Jack's friend Lin Chien-Shih in Calgary, and met Jack through him, when Jack was an artist in residence in Calgary. I did not study with Jack, but, in fact, he asked me to take over his class at the Metchosin Summer School. One of his students is teaching it now, Lorne Loomer. Whoever is closest to the fire gets the warmth!

### **What do you, as an artist, feel that his lasting impact was?**

Oh, their friendship was so special, Jack and Chien-Shih. Lin Chien-Shih carved 12 chops for Jack. Art, visual art, was the way they communicated, because of their different languages. That relationship, I think, will have a lasting influence. They were so close, and they chose a difficult path through their art. Their relationship was an education, and Jack's work will have a lasting impact. In terms of his work, The Dorje Series, a series of large pieces, which is so much a part of Tibetan spirituality, and done with so much skill - I went to Victoria to see them at the Karma of the Dragon show. But I thought that that series and the large yellow mandala in that show were the pinnacle of his work. They were so tight.

Once you start looking at his work, you start to find that you are drawn to it. You can visualize it. Well, that's what he worked for. That's what he did, he played with the synapses in your mind, your mind's eye. Chien-Shih did that as well.

### **Do you think you could get a sense of who he was as a person through his art?**

Only by seeing the full range of his work, if you looked at his earlier pieces, too, and work from different periods. You couldn't, totally, unless you saw his work during his years in the mid-west, his early pieces, too, sculpture and also his writing: examples from all his different periods, as well as his mandalas and brush work.

### **What do you think he would think of having his work posted on the internet?**

Well, he was the kind of person that was "Well, however the universe unfolds." Jack wanted to have all his work housed in one place. He was very adamant about NOT fragmenting it. [a colleague once contacted Myken Woods about potential locations in Calgary for housing his works, collectively] It's really interesting, this idea of a "virtual gallery", and I suppose that's one way that his work could be shown all together. I would like to see this kind of project done for Lin Chien-Shih, a web site on his work, as well.

## Toni Onley

*Toni Onley (www.shinnova.com/artsource/toni.html) was born on the Isle of Man in the United Kingdom and moved to British Columbia in 1955. He met Jack Wise during his studies at the Instituto Allende, and has many amusing stories about their lives in Mexico. Toni Onley is a renowned watercolourist now living in Vancouver, known primarily for his landscape work. His paintings are in the National Gallery of Canada, the Tate in London and other world class collections. (interviewed by Angela Andersen, Vancouver, B.C., March 2001)*

### **How did you know Jack?**

I met Jack through a mutual friend in Mexico. Back in England, I got a letter saying he would like to see me. When I visited, Jack was living in B.C with his wife Jamie at the time, in a nudist colony. I drove up and I found Jack nailing shingles to his roof, stark naked!

### **In terms of his work, what was your favourite piece, or the one that you found most moving?**

Probably the best ones that he did, were, of course, his mandalas. I visited him up on Denman Island, and actually, it was right before his death. He was working on a large piece that still resonates in my mind. I don't know the name of it or anything, very sort of spring-like in virtue.

### **Being an artist yourself, what do you think the lasting impact of Jack Wise's work as an artist will be?**

Jack wasn't interested in fashionable art. Jack was never fashionable, and he prided himself on that. He didn't do political art, which always dates itself very quickly. His work always shows up in shows. I hope I can achieve that timeless presence. Mark Tobey's work was like that as well.

### **Do you think you can get a sense of the person that he was by looking at his art work?**

To a certain extent, I suppose. You wouldn't really, if you didn't know him, get a picture of him by looking at his work. I would get a picture of [an Asian mystic] sitting there, with a long, spindly white beard. You get more of a picture of his mind - his mind comes through in the pictures.

### **What do you think that Jack would think of having his work posted on an internet web site?**

It's hard to tell. I think he'd go for it. He was one of those types that wasn't into a lot of technology, the sort of person who is always trying to pull the plug out. If the lights went out, it wouldn't have bothered him - he pulled the plug on himself, anyway, up on the islands. But, I'm sure he would be pleased to have his work more available. It's a way of keeping him out there, especially for the students. It's keeping me out there as well.

### **His work, in many ways, can be divided into two groups: his brush work and his mandala work. Which do you feel he was more passionate about?**

Probably his brush work. He felt the most freed by his brush work. The mandalas were more studied - he sometimes drew them out. The black and white pieces were in a smaller format, and they didn't go into the detail of the mandalas. I had several of them - they really were gems.

### **You were one of the few people who actually knew him before he moved to Canada. I was wondering if you could maybe comment on some of his earlier work.**

It was quite different from what he was doing here. In Mexico, he was working on larger works, he was working on collages at the time. I remember one, specifically, that was burnt paper. He was in a transition period, in Mexico, very influenced by Abstract Expressionism, yet to reach the Oriental way of approaching art. There was no line, and then there was: you sort of paint blindly, and then you sort of sit back and you look at it. It was very much another mode.

**Was the spiritual aspect something that he incorporated later on, or did he always have that aspect in his work?**

He did have that element in his work, although, he was a very different person after he left. He was a very big part of the drug culture. He was a bit of a wild man. He carried a pistol, and he'd ride out into the desert, and fire at anything. We had a mutual friend, Ken Bowman, and they were earning a living by doing batik cloth for the tourist trade and he hated them. There was one of them hanging on the wall in Ken's house, and Jack pulled his pistol out and fired at it and put a great hole in it!

He used to drink a lot. I remember once they told me he was in jail. I went down to see the chief guy, and I said, "Well, what has Jack done?" And he said, "You'd better go and talk to him." So I went down to the basement of the jail, and he was behind the bars, stark naked. I said, "What are you doing in there?" and he said, "I don't know. They just pulled me up the street and they threw me in here. I wasn't doing anything, I was just coming home from the bar." And I looked at him and I said, "Jack, you've got no clothes on." And he looked, and he said "Yeah, where are my clothes?"

He became an entirely different person, you know, when he came here, entirely different. It was like he was reborn, or something. It was an amazing transformation. You know, I always went out of my way to help Jack. I helped him get his first shows in Canada, I got him into the Bau-Xi Gallery, tried to get him selling his paintings so that he could survive. He did quite well at the beginning, but then he was sort of drawn to Texada Island. He was sort of out of the swim, and literally, you couldn't get hold of him.

After [their art dealer] ran off with all the artists' money, including mine, Jack was trying to track him down. He was buying a house, in Nelson, at the time. He needed the money, and they owed him \$7000. He's lucky he wasn't in Mexico, or Jack would have shot him! I think Jack was saddened by that. He didn't trust the galleries after that.

## Astri Wright

*Dr. Astri Wright is a professor of traditional and contemporary South and Southeast Asian art history at the University of Victoria. Coming from Norway, via grad studies in the US, China and Indonesia, and with a longstanding interest in Tibetan and contemporary art, she first encountered Jack Wise's work through new friend and mentor Madeleine Shields, soon after moving to Victoria.. (correspondence with Angela Andersen, Victoria B.C., March 2001)*

Madeleine Shields' mandala work roped me in, with its richness in colour and its brocade-like layering of symbols, both figurative and abstract. Madeleine told me she had studied with this local painter, and throughout her teaching of the technique of inner dialoguing while exploring and painting your own mandalas, which I was very fortunate to be able to study with her, she kept referring to Jack Wise. Slowly I began to form an impression of Jack and confirmed the immediate kinship I had felt to his teaching philosophy as well as to the first works of art I was able to see.

Madeleine's observation that the link between an active spirituality and a transformative art practice had been lost in the western world but not in the East, was one I shared, and we resonated deeply around this regret. Madeleine told me that Jack's mandala art was "the most integrative and transformative thing" she knew. She believes that it was a technique and process that every artist should be taught. Jack Wise's works, which I encountered first in a private home, stood out immediately to me as work that embraced universal truths on so many levels of form and meaning, rather than offering some degree of universality through themes and meanings, media and techniques which are marked clearly by specificities of locale and time.

Jack Wise's art represents an early, pioneering example of the kind of East-West, North-South, trans-linguistic linkages and exchanges that are becoming one of the central characteristics of 21st century culture. Looking at, thinking of, Jack Wise's mandala paintings, in particular, I am looking through the conceptual iris of a dead painter's eyes, into his mind and soul. I enter the colourfield, energy-field, of the evidence that Jack did break out of patterns within which he was raised and travelled to alien shores and mountains, to learn art techniques few people back home could relate to. Jack was a traveller of the mind and the body, and while he is now gone, his art still testifies to some of his dramatic departures. His paintings are, perhaps, signs of his arrivals, proof that 'Jack was here', deeply, fully, and whole. Still points in a life characterized by searching; vessels containing the stillness of solitude, mapping meditations on the mantras of brush, pigment, and form.

Turning his back on pure formalist play, on cynical political statements and pop-art, Jack sought out teachers outside the western art world who could teach him about the transformative powers form and colour could have over psyche and spirit. Connecting across centuries of left-brain cultivation in the rationalist-secular Euro-American world, towards practices of a type that 'we' had marginalized and stigmatized since the Middle Ages, Jack defied the narrowness of the art world around him. With his work, as he practiced and taught it, he ignored the categorical divisions erected between 'art', 'therapy', and 'spiritual practice,' bridging these, and out of that emerged the form of the circle, emblem of wholeness, as a site for safe exploration of the depths within and without.

To me, a global wanderer, art lover and writer, encountering the art of Jack Wise affirmed how one can encounter the presence and the workings of a universal mind/spirit, wherever one goes, although they are few and far between. What do I mean with 'a universal mind/spirit'? ("Is this person some kind of fuzzed, romantic post-hippie airhead?" you ask.) No. But I do distinguish between what most people (and most artists) do and what the small number of break-away non-conformists do. Most people root themselves in the particulars of their 'here-and-now,' embracing the emblems and modes of their era, and play with these, perhaps tweaking, twisting, or stretching them, to make an original mark, but essentially staying within their culture.

But a few people make a leap, out of their geo-cultural and temporal parameters, and reach for something that appears new to their surroundings and peers, even when this 'new' thing is actually far older than the artist's own 'traditions' and, in fact, turns out to be something that resonates more deeply within the artist than the elements of the familiar that surround him or her.

Sanskrit has rhythmic-poetic terms for these two different kinds of paths through life: the astikas are the orthodox, or 'yay-sayers', who go with the expected flow, and the nastikas are the heterodox, who say: "... but no! I think I shall have to try it this way!" And proceed surrounded largely by solitude, because no one understands what they are up to. Not until much, much later. Encountering Jack, I encounter another nastika; not a nay-sayer to the existence of mind and spirit, but to the cultural conventions and institutional regulations that would limit his access to the fullest and deepest orchestration of these.

I lose myself in Jack's mandalas. Here is the familiar transformed - here is the cosmic diagram, with the four directions encircling the centre, with the gateways both welcoming and maze-like, and the idea of the journeying eye representing the journey of life and death and rebirth and the cycles of growth we may turn. Here is also pure, abstract colour play and powerful, even monumental compositions, where geometric shapes are assembled into wholes that are both organic and essences of deep structure. Yet, Jack Wise's mandala paintings are neither 'Tibetan', 'Buddhist', 'New Age' nor 'modern western' art. If anything, they may combine fragments or deep roots of all these, and more. While I bathe in their aesthetic impact and slowly align my psycho-somatic rhythms with theirs, I struggle to try to define Jack's work. They just won't come. A little laugh begins to bubble up towards the surface of my mind and words begin to take shape. Finally I can see them, like tiny, three-dimensional tongues of fire echoing the shape of the soft hairs of a fine paintbrush: "That which can be spoken is not the true Wise." [This is a play on the Taoist teaching "That which can be spoken is not the Way, the Tao"]

## Stephen Cummings

*Stephen Cummings' response in 1998 to information on Jack Wise available for public view on the internet was I "fear that Jack should somehow awake and deliver a fierceness upon us for violating his devotion to the tactile object! He refused to be filmed or videotaped, was reluctant to be photographed, and was very disturbed that once I photographed his Texada studio. Howsoever, Jack has passed into us, and into now, and we have to follow the lights as they appear to us! " (AGGV/ Nicholas Tuele e.mail Archives, 19 March 1998).*

The following was taken from Karma of the Dragon: The Art of Jack Wise.

The cover of artscanada (Winter 1975-76, Issue 202/203) features Jack in his Texada Island studio, his legs folded in a semi-lotus position, at work on a mandala. Despite the limited light from a small window, what appears to be light from a single incandescent bulb overhead and the large visor cap he wears, Jack's face is shadowless -- as though the light which illuminates his face arises somehow from the painting he is working on. His hand holds a small Chinese brush, his little finger just touching the work surface and his eyes, undoubtedly, are focused on the tip of this brush. Another photograph on page one of this issue shows a close-up of his hand holding the brush. The brush tip is almost invisibly fine and the concentration required to control it and to respond to its sudden springy movements is equally fine, and intense.

Jack wrote to me on August 12, 1976, saying, "My own act, as painter was - is - not so much to be permeated by nature or any specific phenomenon, but to pierce through that neural skin - Greenfield is not a place but a condition." "Greenfield" is a colour-field Texada painting which, in a previous letter from me to Jack I had likened to the patternings of lichens on the apple trees outside his log cabin home/studio.

Jack was a wide-ranging reader: he read science, especially physics, the geometries of Wentworth-Thompson and Mandelbrot, and various eastern philosophies. He was a classroom student of Huston Smith (who later founded the Department of Religion at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology). He had an audience with the Dalai Lama and was friends with Lobsang Phuntshok Lhalungpa, a former Tibetan state oracle (whose essay on the structure of the Buddhist mandala appears as the Introduction to the catalogue of Mystic Circle, an exhibition Jack curated for the Burnaby Art Gallery in 1973). He maintained friendships with George Woodcock and Lin Chien-Shih among so many others. However, neither Jack's scholarship nor his real-time intellectual engagements sustained his inspiration. The source was personal experience.

In a 1996 letter, he wrote "I'm looking at a stone which I stole from the Bison-gallery at Altamira - long before they closed the caves to or from public visitation." I remembered a story Jack told me about how he came to paint rocks. He was on a trip to Spain; and in those caves he particularly admired a cave painting of a bison. He wondered how the artists who made the painting did so (their technique) and why they chose to paint bison (to celebrate a hunt?). When he emerged from the caverns and looked at his stolen stone, he saw the distinct, unmistakable outline of a bison in the natural formation of the stone itself. He said, "I suddenly realized that they [the artists] hadn't been painting BISON, they had been painting STONE!"

I think this was a very important moment in Jack's life as an artist. This moment of revelation helps in understanding his approach to painting, especially how he came to populate his formal mandalas with fields of calligraphy. I think it also helps to explain his preference for gouache and pigment.

If you take the insight literally, "I am painting stone," and change the syntax slightly, you get a meta-physical statement, "I am painting-stone," in which painting-stone is a noun. Thus it is appropriate that the paint be stone-ground pigment and the surface, solid rock. The technical distinction between paint and rock surface blurs -- and probably at moments of greatest concentration, the distinction is eliminated altogether. At those moments of greatest concentration Jack had the mystical experience of becoming the painting event, that is of selflessness within an aesthetic moment. It only makes sense that he would look at and, at various times, embrace Zen, meditation, Buddhism and other eastern activities which offered confirmation of the experience of selflessness.

Jack painted on rocks; on paper and canvas he painted mandalas, colour-fields, magical calligraphies with angels. He told me that on Texada Island he painted on driftwood and rocks at the beach in water-soluble ink and left them there for the tide to deal with. He also painted on left-over popcorn and tried ink he made from mushrooms (which later grew and dusted framed drawings with spores)! He exhibited the products of these activities in a way which frequently frustrated gallery owners: he refused to price a painting higher simply because it was bigger.

For Jack, the painterly experience had highest value. He tried to include what he knew to be true of the painterly experience in all other aspects of his life, with varying degrees of success. He excelled as a teacher and his methodologies have touched the lives of many west coast artists and buyers of art.

The mandalas are a particularly easy entry into his mind-set and painterly practice. View each from the outside ring in. Focus carefully on the brush work. Seek the smallest brush stroke. Move to the next inner ring. Do the same. Don't think! If you have concentrated, if there have been no interruptions, you may come to the most important brush stroke of all: the last one, which is the physical embodiment of all the experiences, psychic and corporeal, which bore down on the artist painting toward that centre, central, last expressive stroke. If you find it, the mandala will snap into a three-dimensional perspective, which some say is merely a visual trick and others say is a mystical experience. Then, consider the power of the experience when this viewing process is also included in the hundreds of hours passing in complete silence as the artist leans through the brush into the visual world flickering at the brush tip.

*When I set down my brush  
Whole Universes vanish -- Empires collapse  
and races die away.\**

There is no doubt that Jack's painting arose from passion, nor that that passion was consummated at the infinitely fine tip of a brush piercing the neural boundaries of everyday consciousness. The work of Jack Wise is among the clearest articulations of why art remains the last great frontier of the questing spirit.

\*Stanza of a poem Jack sent me in December 1974. It may be Jack's own, more likely it is a translation.