

BY NANCY ZIMMERMAN  
PORTRAIT BY ?

# VISUAL POETRY

**A**s a painter, photographer, architect, and appreciator of beauty in all its forms, Charles Gurd sees art as a field of energy that is transferred from the artist to the viewer. “Reality is in continual motion, and particle physics proves that energy manifests as the color spectrum,” he points out. “Great art is that which transfers the most energy.”

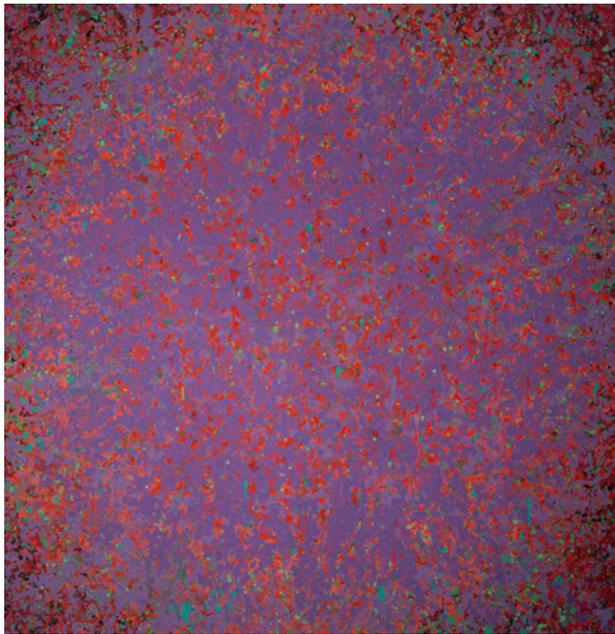
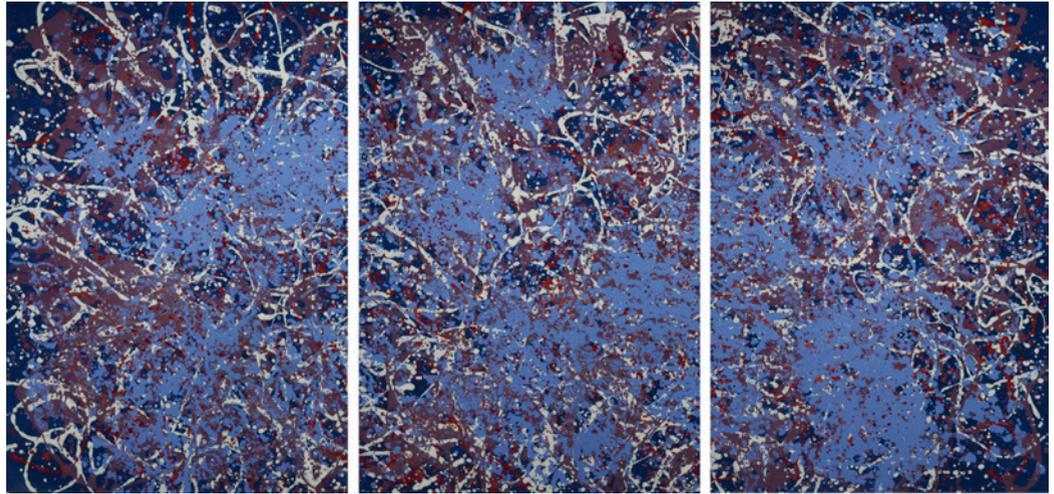
A native of Montreal, Quebec, Gurd initially studied behavioral psychology before taking up architecture, which led him to work with such notable companies as I. M. Pei & Partners and the design office of Charles and Ray Eames. “I was always into drawing, even as a kid,” he says, “and I went into architecture so I could draw for a living. In those pre-computer days, architecture was all about drawing.”

As satisfying as that was, he became frustrated with the lengthy time frames that major architectural projects demanded, which averaged about ten years from concept to completion. “I wanted to explore ideas and aesthetics at my own pace,” he says. “I had always been drawn to photography, which demands a visual acuity and training of the eye that’s similar to drawing. It required a concentration that, as with drawing, was necessary for pulling out the poetic essence of the subject matter.”

Ultimately, though, it’s painting that feeds his soul and allows him to integrate his many interests—nature, metaphysics, ancient philosophies, the transcendent potential of art. “The expression of an artist should be one of unity,” he says. “Physicists recognize that everything in nature is unified, and a work of art is only successful when expressing that truth. On one level, nature can be read as total randomness, but on another level as total unity. Brush marks on a canvas result-



Charles Gurd in his Santa Fe studio with some of his works in progress..



ing in unity help viewers to become more unified within themselves as a result of viewing the art.”

Gurd’s paintings evince a Pollock-esque sensibility, fusing color and motion into an indivisible whole that takes the viewer beyond the abstraction to address some of art’s core issues: randomness versus order, chaos versus control, fragmentation versus integration. Stripped of all narrative content, his work explores an inner landscape that throbs with energy and spontaneity even as it distills these forces into a single, cohesive entity. By showing us the unity of purpose and form that underlies the apparent randomness of nature, Gurd’s paintings offer us a complete experience, what he calls “a plane of poetics that’s nonverbal, with its own logic system that cannot be verbalized. It has to do with a source of energy encapsulated in the work.”

Gurd maintains studios in Santa Fe, the Luberon region of France, and Victoria, B.C., all places that inspire him and help him achieve the transfer of energy that lies at the core of his work. As he travels from home to home, he opens his heart and mind to the inherent perfection of nature and, indeed, our own existence, to produce works that speak to the wonders and challenges of the human condition. \* [charliegurd.ca](http://charliegurd.ca)

Top: *Tryptych, Dance With Unity*, oil on canvas.  
Center: *Veil*, oil on canvas.  
Bottom: *Diptych Enthalpy*, oil on canvas. Gurd’s kinetic work explores the nature of energy and its role in creating unity.

