

FROELICK GALLERY

Michael Schultheis

Optics of Euclid, October 2010

The paintings featured in *Optics of Euclid* are inspired by the ancient Greek mathematician Euclid of Alexandria, also known as The Father of Geometry. Euclid wrote the remarkable treatise *Optics* (280 BC), in which he documents his discovery of the geometry of vision. In this body of work, I explore this literature on Optics and formulate my own narrative of how I “see” - both geometrically as well as symbolically.

The most prominent geometric shape is the lotus-like blossom, illuminated in the interstices of Euclid’s models. When certain ratios are changed, the entire life-cycle of the lotus evolves and their petals seem to completely unfurl. By painting the different states of this dynamic process, I become part of the unfurling, too. A part of the transformation. This process of painting and reinterpreting the geometry of vision brings me closer to understanding the universal nature of Euclid’s ideas, and imbues new meaning into what I see as an artist and why I paint.

In addition to Euclid’s *Optics*, I have also found inspiration in studying the Law of Refraction by the Dutch mathematician Willebrord Snellius (1621) and French philosopher Rene Descartes (1637). *Snell’s Law* explains the relationship by which the passage of light rays trace through optical systems. Specifically, I model parameters of human relationships in terms of the sines of light rays, and through this transformation, provide insight into the influences people have on each other’s lives.

These paintings are my own palimpsests or manuscripts - discoveries as well as reinterpretations of the individual geometric framework of vision as well as the collective and resonant geometry of relationships. Through them, I also pay homage to the universal and timeless treasures Euclid, Snell and Descartes give to all mathematicians and artists.

For me, these works are about understanding the geometry of vision, as well as transcending the geometry and discovering a new way to see.

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