The Work of Angel Orensanz

paintings
drawings
sculptures
installations
In the 1980s Angel Orensanz arrived in New York City and opened his studio on Norfolk Street in the Lower East Side. He has since used the space to develop major installation concepts for environmental shows such as when he performed in Holland Park, London; Red Square, Moscow; Roppongi-Park and Senso-ji Temple, Tokyo; the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin; and the ABC Playground, New York City.

Since the early 60’s Angel has been developing a prolific body of work in performance, conceptual art, and video. His pieces often carry a marked political and social commentary that is reinforced by a very personal, poetic language. The concepts he elaborates on include themes such as energy, memory, risk, compromise, will, universality, and enthusiasm. To depict them he often uses contradictions like chiaroscuro/color, death/birth, and baroque/minimalism.

Angel places his audience in front of these striking contradictions and asks them to eschew standard academic conventions and vocabulary. The active spectator’s role is to reconcile the dissociative entities linked to each other by the artist. Angel is an artist who utilizes the moment. Like the impressionists, he seizes the exclusivity of the instant and plays with everything he can to extract from it. It is through these artistic endeavors that he reveals the truth beyond contradictions and finds what is hidden behind what is apparent.
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Upon returning to New York City in September 2012, Angel Orensanz presented his *Burning Bronzes*, a show centered around four newly created bronze sculptures. Each bronze varies in size – from $14 \times 5 \times 6$ in to $7 \times 4 \times 5$ in. Each bronze was crafted with care, yet they are not smooth as one might expect, but riddled with little grooves and indents which show that they are crafted by human hands. Two of the bronzes are of hands reaching out and grasping for something or someone. In contrast, the other two bronzes depict a man on a horse (*El Cid*) and a group of people pushing against an unknown force (*Bodies*). The meanings to each bronze are up to the onlooker, as with most art. However the four can be viewed as interconnected. The two hands reach towards the sky while the *Bodies* push against an unseen force and the soldier in *El Cid* is poised; perhaps the bronzes present the idea of preparing for a war. Who can say but the artist himself?
Small Hand (1/7)
Bronze
2012
7 x 4 x 5 in

El Cid (Horse) (1/7)
Bronze
2012
14 x 5 x 6 in
Angel has created numerous series of art, and perhaps one of his more intriguing collections would be his *Body Series*. Done on paper with graphite, the 23 x 17 in pieces depict at least one human figure. Unlike most portraits of the human body, however, Angel’s bodies are presented with flowing, at times squiggly, lines that seem to connect with one another. One would think, as a result, that this would lead to a bit of difficulty in telling the figures apart. That is not the case however; as Angel manages to create distinct breaks between the various human figures. From the image of a face staring off to the side, to the bodies reaching skyward, the *Body Series* is a striking series of portraits, all seemingly interconnected and yet separate; much like the flowing but distinct style in which Angel drew them.
top
Body series
Graphite on paper
1983
23 x 17 in

left
Body series
Graphite on paper
1983
22 x 17 in

right
Body series
Graphite on paper
1983
23 x 18 in
Abstract Paintings

Encompassing a body of work Angel has created countless of brightly colored abstract paintings. Done in mixed media on gouache, the subject matter of each canvas is up to the eye of the beholder. The Blue Abstract, for instance, depicts a face. However, the face can only really be seen when looking at it dead on. The other works, like the Green Abstract, do not necessarily depict anything but can be perceived as many things. That is the beauty of Angel’s abstract paintings. They present the viewer with countless of different interpretations, no one being the correct answer. Alongside its bright coloring, the abstract paintings present a treat for the onlooker.
Blue Abstract (1/10)
Monotype
1980
54 x 36 in

Green Abstract (1/10)
Monotype
2006
49 x 36 in

Yellow Abstract (1/10)
Monotype
2006
36 x 51 in
Metal Sculptures

Besides his various installations, Angel might best be known for his metal sculptures, particularly his totems. Most of his totems are installations, placed throughout numerous cities and landscapes. Each of his totems are similar, but different, holding a multicultural influence. The totems are made out of metal, with pieces cut out and other portions welded to stick up. This is the same style in which Angel has created numerous other metal sculptures. The painted *Metal squares* each have portions cut out, in a way reminiscent of a snowflake, but also in a way similar to the totems. Similarly, Angel’s *Sphere of the world* features people popping out of the otherwise smooth looking metal. These forms are welded outwards, all but emerging from the metal globe that Angel has crafted. All his metal sculptures follow a similar style of cuts and welding, but also hold a multicultural influence that is seemingly timeless.
top left
Sphere of the world
Steel
2008
72 x 72 in

bottom left
Sphere of the world
Steel
2008
72 x 72 in

right
Metal Squares
Spray paint on steel
2000
25 x 24 in
Matter/Light

Each of Angel’s Matter/Light paintings are very unique to the artist, both in how they are created and how they are presented. The works themselves are printed onto a clear material with vibrant colors and strong brush strokes that catch the eye of people passing by. Once complete they are mounted into light boxes, allowing the work to be projected for the onlookers passing by. Due to the clear canvases, however, this allows Angel to do quite an interesting thing. He is able to remove them from the light boxes, taking them to wherever he would like. This allows the pieces to have varying backgrounds; from black tops to grass to street lights. Angel has portrayed his clear paintings with numerous backgrounds that often lead to stark contrasts, and no piece has had the same background. While his paintings may generally be presented within the light boxes that has never stopped Angel from snapping photos of them in different locations.
left
Untitled 06
Light box photography in duratrans
2009
24.5 x 36.3 x 4.75 in

top right
Untitled 14
Light box photography in duratrans
2009
24.5 x 36.3 x 4.75 in

bottom right
Untitled 16
Light box photography in duratrans
2009
24.5 x 36.3 x 4.75 in
The Abyss of the Gulf

Angel’s installations have always been a breathtakingly unique, and powerful in their messages. Perhaps even more breathtaking though is when he has taken his installations and put them underwater. His underwater installations have a haunting sense of beauty, like a world forgotten beneath the surface. By using strategically placed items like dolls or a guitar the haunting nature is exemplified, telling a story without that being the artist’s true intention. Also distinctive of the underwater installations is the photographs taken during them. In some, Angel is able to go into the water, sometimes with a partially painted but otherwise clear tarp. The images documented create a surreal atmosphere, which only add to the beauty.
The Abyss of the Gulf
Compilation of various submerged objects
2010
Silk Constructs

Displaying his work in public has always been something Angel enjoys. His public art installations vary in materials – sometimes they are colorful circles and other times fabrics tied together. These installations are ones meant for all to enjoy, often placed in locations that people will pass through. Children are able to throw the colorful Frisbees back and forth (perhaps at time with Angel himself) while others can just immerse themselves in a different world that he has created. These installations all are temporary, springing up almost overnight and surprising people who simply were passing through on their way to work or school.

Ist
St. Petersburg public installation
Silk constructs
2005
Sails of arrival, sails of departure
Silk constructs
2006

Gulf
Silk constructs
2010

Gulf
Silk constructs
2010
AOF Installations

Since the founding of the Angel Orensanz Foundation for the Arts in the Lower East Side of New York, there have been numerous installations set up inside the building. From his interpretation of the Sistine Chapel (The Floating Sistine Chapel) to a haunting face crafted out of flowers and flames (The Titanic that never reached New York) each of the indoor installations that have filled the high lofted ceilings of the former synagogue have been magnificent works of art. Many times there is a surreality of being able to walk through them, but also an emotional charge. This emotional charge changes from installation to installation. For some of them it is the utter awe of the grandness, while others cause a sense of bittersweetness.
top left
Floating Sistine Chapel
Fabric constructs
2010

bottom left
Night of the galaxy
( Homage to Caravaggio)
Compilation of various
objects
2004

right
Titanic that never
reached New York
Flowers, fabric, and chair
construct
2009
Biographical Timeline

1959  Studies at the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes de Barcelona for a MA in Art History.

1965  Studies at École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France.

1968  Wooden Relief; Munich, Germany.


1976  Sculpture installed at the Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona.

1977  XIV Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil.

1979  Opening of Museo Angel Orensanz y Artes de Serrablo; Sabinariego, Spain

Speed Bird and Lineal; Entrance of Barcelona International Airport.

1981  American Landscapes; IBM Center (Marcel Breuer Building) Boca Raton, Florida.

1982  Warspell sculpture installation and performance; Central Park in New York City, NY.

1985  Tangible Sounds; Studio 54 in New York City, NY.

South Music; Marriott Marquis Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia.

1988  Inauguration of the Angel Orensanz Foundation, Center for the Arts on Norfolk St., New York City, NY.

1990  Musicalia exhibition; Ropongi Park in Tokyo, Japan.

1991  Retrospective exhibit at Tallin Arts Center, Tallin, Estonia. Organized by the Ministry of Culture of Estonia.

1992  Solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Tokyo, Japan.

1995  Retrospective exhibition at Charles Luckman Gallery; California State University in Los Angeles, California.

Shoe Installation Sculpture at the Bata Shoe Museum; Toronto, Canada.

1999  The Peace Bus; Florence, Italy.

Cinta di Firenze Award at the II Biennal di Arte Contemporanea; Florence, Italy.

2000  Residency at the Jewish Museum in Rendsburg; Kiel, Germany.

2001  Sculpture commemorative of filmmaker Luis Buñuel; Madrid, Spain.

Prints by Orensanz purchased by the Biblioteca Nacional de España for the collection of Masters of Drawing and Prints; Madrid, Spain.

2002  Carries Sphere down 5th Avenue in commemoration of Ground Zero; New York City, NY.

2005  Prix Pierre Oulmont, Sculpture Prize; Foundation de France.

Burning Universe; Palazzo Malipiero in Venice, Italy.

Earth: Death-Birth; Rummynnev Palace in collaboration with Russian Museum; St. Petersburg, Russia.

Earth: Death-Birth; Alexander Pushkin Museum in Moscow, Russia.

2007  Exhibition in Tel Aviv; Israel; May 22 – July 22.

The Orensanz of Orensanz retrospective; Cajalon Gallery in Zaragoza, Spain.

The Garden Before the Serpent; Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza in New York City, NY.

2008  Grand Cinema Award for short The Final Score; Monte Carlo Film Festival, Monaco.

Grand Award; Lido (Venice), Italy.

2010  The Abyss of the Gulf; New York City, NY.

The Floating Sistine Chapel of Angel Orensanz; New York City, NY.

Time Split; Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.

2011  NY Armory Arts Week; exhibition of Isael and Orensanz's video works.

Exhibition Angel Orensanz, 20 Years in Russia; Museum of the Russian Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Paradigma; El Museo del Traje in Madrid, Spain.

2012  Sphere at the Olympics; London, England

Installation; The University of Barcelona, Spain.

Burning Bronzes; New York City, NY.