

THE ART AND LIFE OF HAYNES OWNBY

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Since beginning his practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in August 1985, Haynes Ownby has never veered from his life's goal of being a successful abstract painter. By consequence, his quiet determination, prayer and efforts have borne irrefutable results in the whole spectrum of his life.

In order to create his art, Haynes needed financial stability. At fifty-five, he initially chanted to earn a living without restricting himself to the time constraints of a full-time job. Over the years of his Buddhist practice, he has also challenged epilepsy, and has not suffered from a seizure or needed medication for the past ten years.

By 1999, Haynes was well on the road to solvency; he sold a painting to the El Paso Museum, and the same year was asked to be one of Provincetown International Art Institute's (affiliated with Cape Cod Community College) core founding art instructors. This salaried teaching job allowed Haynes to stay on top of his finances while leaving him plenty of time to work on his own paintings.

In June 1999, Haynes underwent a successful operation to remove half of his cancer-stricken right lung. He was able to teach through the 1999–2000 academic year, but the cancer returned to his left lung in the spring and he was forced to give up his position. Last year, however, the prestigious Pollock/Krasner Foundation awarded Haynes its largest grant of \$30,000. This award allowed Haynes to paint for a year and prepare for his retrospective show at the Cape Cod Museum of Fine Arts which, on November 18, 2000, presented him with an award for his ongoing service and commitment. These awards are proof of the positive, caring and persevering life of Haynes Ownby.

His art has always been of a high quality, he feels, thanks particularly to studying with his "mentor in art," the great Bavarian artist/teacher, Hans Hofmann, who has recently been identified as one of the most important abstract expressionists and compared with Picasso and Matisse. But, it has been by activating his enlightened life force through chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo that Haynes believes has allowed his art to truly blossom, his creativity, concentration, and sureness of stroke strengthened and refined.

Regarding his art, Haynes said: "Mostly I'm doing what I call semiautomatic work now. [My paintings are] different from the more geometric work that people know me for. I use a swirl of lines that's put down without thought. It goes back to the automatic drawing of the Surrealists. I do that, then fill in the spaces with black and white or color." He continues: "Sometimes at the beginning I have an idea. You get into a state of mind. You have to concentrate in the moment; it's not thinking in the usual sense. Just say to yourself, let's go, let's do it." He believes the way to uncover one's own artistic "self" is by allowing oneself to be influenced by other great art and literature.

The following is a quote by Goethe, which Haynes said has always inspired him: "Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth — the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves, too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has

genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now.”

Although developing cancer was a tough blow, he used his Buddhist practice to challenge his health and work to the very last moment of his life. Whenever I chanted with Haynes, I was always the one who was encouraged. He was always there as a friend for me in the practice, and I know other members who would offer similar words of grateful praise. All the people in Haynes’ life came to hold special value in his heart. “The members,” he said, “are like a family to me.”

Haynes Ownby died April 10, 2001.