

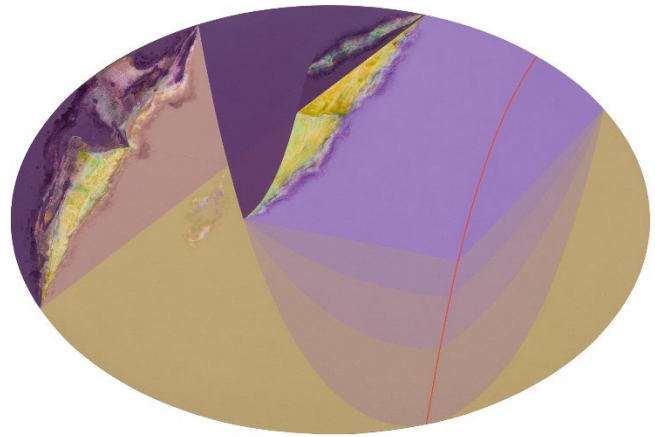
March 26 through May 28, 2023

Evidence of Gravity and Other Works

by

David Yūst

of Fort Collins, CO



*Chromaxiologic – Inclusion with 3 Catenary Curves and
2 Broken Catenary Curves #10/19 by David Yūst*

Knowing that Dave Yūst started out by studying aeronautical engineering and architecture design explains much about his painstaking, meticulous process of planning and building each of his dynamic acrylic

paintings. As a boy in Wichita—still known as the “air capital of the world”—he designed and built model airplanes from scratch, learning by doing the physics necessary to support flight. Turning to painting and rendering images in pure abstraction by the 1960s, Yūst remained fascinated by the challenge of resolving the philosophical problems sparked by combining geometric, hard-edged flat color and biomorphic, organic shapes in his canvases that would also remain true to mathematical and physical laws of the universe.

Yūst was born in 1939 into a family that fostered the arts, who happily provided the burgeoning artist with hands-on art instruction at the Wichita Art Association in drawing, painting, metalsmithing, and ceramics. His musician parents were close friends with the Swedish American landscape painter Birger Sandzén (1871–1954) and arranged private lessons in that artist’s home studio in Lindsborg during the summer of 1951, when Dave was only 12 years old, but already poised to embark upon a creative professional career.

Recognized by the Academy of Model Aeronautics for his original designs, Yūst easily won the Walter Beech Scholarship to attend Wichita State University 1957–1959. The young artist moved to Kansas State University in 1959 to concentrate on architectural design, and also took art courses in painting from Gerald Deibler (1927–1977) and pottery from Angelo Garzio (1922–2008). Finishing in 1961 Yūst returned home to Wichita and worked for an architectural firm for a short time, gaining experience while also gathering certainty in his desire to finally pursue a BFA in painting and drawing at the University of Kansas under the Yale-trained Robert Berkeley Green (1909–2007) by 1963. Yūst moved to Colorado after graduating, first settling in Denver and meeting Vance Kirkland (1904–1981) while wandering his neighborhood.

The fall of 1965 saw both Dave and his wife, Joan (née Dalby), hired by Colorado State University art department chair Clara Hatton (1901–1991) to teach at the university in Fort Collins. Dave would continue on with the university through 2012, teaching painting and drawing for 47 years. Concurrently, his summers of 1966 through 1969 were spent with the University of Oregon, earning an MFA in painting under the direction of Jack Wilkinson (1913–1974), who inspired Yūst’s early focus on geometric symmetry, resulting in the series *Explorations in Symmetry* from 1969 through 1981.

Despite the years of concentration on structure and composition, it was Yūst’s earliest training that had introduced him to the possibilities of building with color. Though he may not have realized it at the time, Sandzén’s landscape paintings showed the young artist how to construct paintings from pure color, straight from the tube. Sandzén had stopped using black entirely by 1907, long before the private summer lessons of 1951, and had established his signature style and practice of bold brushwork using only a limited palette of ten oil pigments,

including the basics of French Ultramarine, Cadmium Red, Raw Sienna, and Titanium White. Sandzén escaped the “tyranny of green” in his Kansas and Colorado landscape scenes, rendering recognizable tree species and rock formations with splashes of red and blue, along with some necessary browns and greens.

In later years, Yüst distilled Sandzén’s color practice of “simultaneous contrast,” of laying down swathes of different colors with the same values of light to dark next to each other. Because the intensities are so alike, it would be difficult to see contrasts in a black-and-white photograph of a painting composed with this balance of “equi-luminous color.” Sandzén provided the model, using equally intense color pairings in his landscapes for a unified, harmonic whole.

A dramatic shift came in 1982 with the introduction of the *Inclusion Series*. As the artist explains, Robert Venturi’s essay *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977) inspired him to strive for the “difficult unity of inclusion rather than the easy unity of exclusion” beyond arbitrary limits. In following years a more inclusive process allowed experiments in the range of color values for lights and darks, dabbling in the use of tertiary colors mixed from two secondaries, and exploring the nature of arcs and curves.

A new century marked further inclusions of new forms in the artist’s serial practice. In 2003 Yüst reached back to his mathematical training to plot catenary curves within the visual field of his canvases, and in 2005, constructed his first elliptically shaped canvas to extend the gravitational pull of the catenary curves. The physics of catenary curves provides a reliable repetition of form, as described by the fall of a uniformly dense cable suspended between two points. Telephone wires stretched between two poles are catenary curves, and Eero Saarinen’s (1910–1961) Saint Louis *Gateway Arch* is an inverted catenary.

Yüst employs flexible chains of tiny ball-bearing links suspended from two opposite sides of his canvas to design the curves in his paintings. The natural shape of the suspended chain is echoed by color fields on the canvas as the artist adds unique topographic features to each composition. In some of Yüst’s paintings, broken catenary curves can be seen. To see what happens when a catenary is interrupted, a simple lift of the ball chain at a point along the curve results in interesting new shapes created by shifting gravitational forces, to witness both active struggle and peaceful equilibrium within the work.

To create a unique Dave Yüst painting, the artist’s process begins with the theoretical principles that are always at the forefront of his mind. With an idea for a new work in hand, he produces dozens of studies. Scale drawings are precisely diagrammed and paired with color swatches along the paper edge before one design is chosen. Architectural plans are laid out for building the stretcher bar framework, often with hundreds of wood pieces to be layered with adhesive and clamped together for incredible stability, to prevent “potato chipping” warping when canvas is stretched tightly over the whole. Yüst applies acrylic pigments smoothly across his spaces, as he strives for a delicate balance of mathematical geometries and organic visual fields in each painting brought to completion.

Cori Sherman North, Sandzén Gallery Curator



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Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m.