

# Beyond-The-Self Exploration - The Shimmering Art of Bruce Rimell

*“The fundamental drive to extend beyond the self, whether experienced as entering into the darkness of one’s own unconscious mind, or into a supernatural ‘otherworld’ that is held to exist beyond the everyday, rests deeply within the human being... Expectations of an ‘otherworld’ are naturally-emergent cognitive artefacts... and rituals, religious practices and visionary experiences are often subjectively and culturally understood to constitute movements into that world. Art resonates with this non-literal but deep-seated understanding which reflects ubiquitous desires to engage outside the boundaries of one’s ego, to move outside what is known, and to explore beyond the customary or the everyday.”*

Bruce Rimell, *‘Liminal Contact’*, 2016

**Interweaving lines, vivid colours, eye-popping detail, and smooth yet fragmented anatomical figures unfold before the viewer’s eyes. Disparate elements unite to create a holistic sense of continuous movement throughout an image which shimmers with animism and wordless humanity, and which invites both close-up inspection as well as more distant enjoyment.**

As the spectator approaches the artwork for a second time, the gallery’s lights go out, but before the darkness can take hold a blacklight flashes into life, and upon the same canvas, a new, different and previously-hidden glowing image suddenly strikes the eye. There is a gasp at the unexpected transformation, and a new understanding of the now-invisible daylight image takes hold.

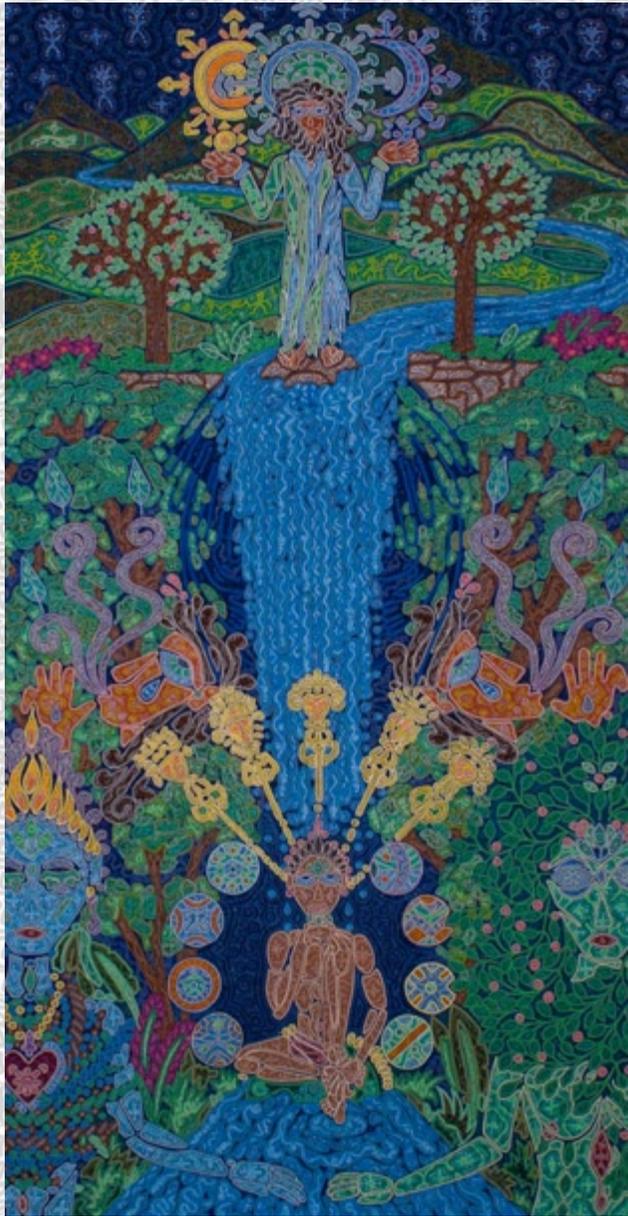
This is the unique feature of Bruce Rimell’s artistic practice: the *‘Dual Image Medium’*, a technique in which two images are created on

the same surface, one rendered in ‘daylight’ media such as acrylics, inks and markers, and the other painted in a unique lacquer which can only be seen under ultraviolet illumination.

The two images are different from each other in both style and content, and the appearance of the ultraviolet image provokes surprise, delight and occasionally, a little bit of a shock.

“One of my collectors in Germany,” Bruce relates, “tells the story of how two priests reacted when they saw my 2012 Dual Image artwork *‘Becoming Christ’*, which is an homage to the Dali painting *‘La Gare De Perpignan’*. When the hidden UV image of a crucified Christ was suddenly revealed, seemingly out of nowhere, the priests shot up, knocking their chairs over and shouted ‘Yes! Yes! This is it, this is exactly it!’ You never quite know people will react when the ultraviolet light switches on.”





**Only One Track Leads Heavenwards**  
Dual-Image Medium, 2018  
(Daylight Image)

Not all of his paintings are Dual Image, however, and he reserves this energy-intensive aspect of his practice only for the really powerful images in his oeuvre. Much of what he creates is rendered only in equally-unique daylight media, but the majority of his work addresses a single theme which for him is a foundational principle: Beyond-The-Self Exploration.

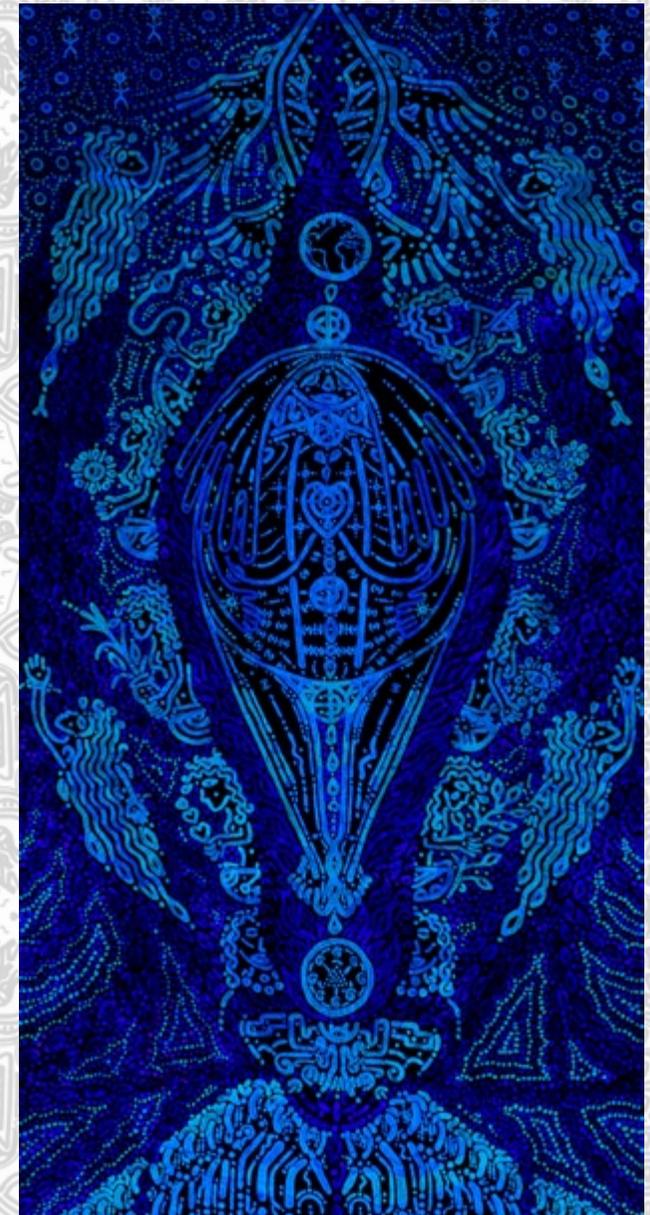
“Anything that gets me beyond my conscious ‘selfhood’, my current identity, my ego or what I think I know right now, any experience which pushes me outside boundaries I didn’t even realise I had, that’s all grist for the artistic mill as far as I’m concerned,” he says.

“These experiences can range from exciting scientific ideas in cognitive psychology to psychedelic and visionary experiences, queer sexual ecstasies, visits to archaeological sites, wild flights of imagination or sitting quietly in meditative ceremony, as well as fascinating concepts and lived experiences from other cultures and languages, and even the act of painting itself.”

Each artwork he creates aims to evoke several of these themes at the same time, seeking to generate experiential depth to match his focus on minute line and colour details which allow the viewer to see something new with every gaze into the canvas.

“All my images spring from an immense commitment in time, and often very detailed

**Only One Track Leads Heavenwards**  
Dual-Image Medium, 2018  
(UV Image)





**!Khwa ~ Rain**  
Acrylics, Inks & Markers  
on Canvas, 2016

though: sometimes they enjoy the mythic quality in the imagery, or simply stand and exclaim how the artwork feels so alive.”

Not bad for a self-taught artist. Born in 1974 in the shadow of the stunning Neolithic landscape of Wiltshire, southwest England, Bruce’s academic background was originally astrophysics, but after graduating, he abandoned the lofty grandeur of cosmology in favour of travelling the world. At length he ended up living in Japan and it was there, at the age of 23, one cold winter’s night he decided to become an artist.

planning,” explains Bruce, “But it’s worth it for the multitude of emotional reactions I get from all around the world. Perhaps my favourite is: I don’t know what I’m seeing here, but I can’t stop looking at it!”

what I’ve intended. Sometimes people draw out long and beautiful narratives, or spiritual conceptions that I don’t really share, but it’s all good. I take it as part of a never-ending learning process, and the dialogue between artist and audience. It’s not always so specific

Though he often enfolded specific ideas and detailed multi-layered intentions into his work, Bruce is not attached to them when his audience proposes a different interpretation of his imagery.

“This is another part of getting beyond the self,” he says, “When someone with a different mind-set responds to the work in ways I never could have seen, I love that, and it’s really important for me to explore with them what they see as much as to relate

**Chiguxica Muisca**  
Acrylics, Inks & Markers  
on Canvas, 2017





**Fernal Ocean Garden**  
Dual Image Medium, 2013-15  
(Daylight & UV Images)

unexpected expansion into the international scene, firstly as part of the Mirca Art Group, then as part of the Art Of Imagination movement, and most recently with the Dreams & Divinities group of visionary and neo-surrealist artists.

His artistic CV also contains some genuinely wild and wonderful venues, from a maze in Normandy, France, to a cardiologist's surgery in Germany, a former cathedral in Spain, and even an open-air *maloca* in the rain forests of northern Colombia as part of eight days of ceremonies with indigenous people.

**What Is Out There...**  
Dual Image Medium, 2016  
(Daylight & UV Images)



Some ten years of honing his craft using a unique blend of acrylics, inks and markers as his canvas medium then ensued, and in 2007 he turned professional, supported by his partner (now husband) Chris, with his first solo exhibition in Leeds.

Several further shows in the north of England, as well as a handful of local prizes and emerging artist awards, were followed by an



He has also exhibited in more conventional galleries, arts festivals, travelling exhibitions and group shows throughout the USA, Mexico, France, Spain, Canada, Finland, Sweden and Germany, and he is involved in a community development initiative in South Africa, painting murals in a township there. Although he is a regular exhibitor at Cupola Gallery in Sheffield in the UK, his work is only rarely seen elsewhere in his home country.

Many of his artworks come in series based around particular themes. Recent highlights include *'The Fernal World'*, a series of artworks created as part of the project to develop the international art publication *'The Encyclopaedia of Fernal Affairs'*, published in 2015 by Dreams & Divinities, as well as *'Coca Seeds'*, an ongoing response to profound and personal transformations begun during the aforementioned visit to Colombia.

But it is the Dual Image Medium which is increasingly his prime focus for development and innovation.

"Having developed this unique approach to art-making, which sits between painting and illustration, as well as between the visible



### And What Will I See? Dual Image Medium, 2018 (UV Image)

and the invisible, I feel a strong drive to see what it can do," he explains. "I want to push it beyond what I've managed to do so far, see where it can lead, where it breaks down, where it can enter into new realms of possibility."

To that end, in 2016 Bruce created a series of small-scale experimental artworks entitled *'Liminal Contact'*, to illustrate his self-published thesis on painting of the same name. These works were all Dual Image, but each canvas was torn before painting, and a linen layer was placed behind the rips to



"The first Dual Image artwork I produced in 2010 was *'Gaia'*, a multi-panel image of the fragile Earth surrounded by protective beings. Under the ultraviolet light, however, the image transforms to reveal Gaia - Mother Earth herself - gazing sorrowfully out at the viewer, communicating the damage we humans are making. On its debut showing in a group exhibition in Cologne, Germany, there was a stunned response. The painting's owner now tells me she often sits quietly late at night with just a UV lamp shining on the painting, and simply gazes at the hidden image only she gets to see."





lend the impression of a third image pushing through from behind the visible surface.

“I was aiming for a kind of multi-dimensionality here in that in addition to the two normal dimensions of the canvas surface, you had a third dimension of the UV image and a fourth dimension of the fragmented image coming through, evoking some realm of dimensionality behind the canvas.”

#### **The Voice Project**

Dual Image Medium, 2010-ongoing  
(Daylight Image, in progress)

#### **The Voice Project**

Dual Image Medium, 2010-ongoing  
(UV Image, in progress)

He is also developing a related technique of ‘Silent Painting’, in which only a blank white field is seen by daylight, but under UV illumination, a painted hidden image comes alive. There are fascinating curatorial possibilities here.

His flagship project, however, is ‘The Voice’, a large-scale, Dual Image, visionary mural of the hidden and forgotten mythologies of



the Island of Britain. Begun in 2010, it is at the time of writing around two more years from completion, and consists of thirteen 75cm (width) x 150cm (height) panels which combine to create a single artwork some ten metres long.

“This is my labour of love,” Bruce says, “It is simultaneously my love-letter to the ancient landscapes of my childhood home of



**Fernal Earthly Garden**  
Dual Image Medium, 2013-15  
(UV Image)

Wiltshire, as well as a grand demonstration of everything my unique media and artistic technique is capable of. I've aimed so far to enfold multiple layers of dense imagery in both the daylight and UV images, working on a scale so large that placed end-to-end, the whole artwork is wider than my house!”

An upcoming series, currently in progress, is ‘*The Ecstasy In Me*’, seven radically graphic self-portraits exploring the transformative, powerful and emotional in queer sexual acts. Drawing from his own experience, this will be an uncompromising series of vivid artworks, aiming to challenge both himself and the wider artistic and LGBTQ+ communities to come to terms with queer sexuality not as something hidden, but as beautiful and worthy of iconic representation.

It's not all so serious however. One of the ways he often seeks to give his multi-cultural source material an air of authenticity is through playful imagery. Figures dance and laugh as much as they express sorrow or challenge the viewer to go deeper. This playfulness makes even his more esoteric work visually

**Fernal Earthly Garden**  
Dual Image Medium, 2013-15  
(Daylight Image)



accessible, and opens up his work to ambiguity and alternative interpretations.

“Play is just another way of getting beyond the self,” he says, “and this way of exploring helps when my art addresses indigenous or multi-cultural themes, because playfulness allows you to integrate new ideas and experiences in wordless and non-appropriating ways. Authenticity is a really key notion for me.”

If authenticity is important, art theory is much less so, and the abandoning of critical positions in favour of a kind of hyperactive visual engagement encourages the viewer to take the same tracks out beyond the boundaries of the self into the same wordless spaces Bruce envisions in his imagery.

“I’m not really interested in theoretical constructs, overtly political art movements or

abstract commentaries in creative discourse. What turns me on, and what I feel really brings my work alive, is that sense of Beyond-The-Self Exploration, and the pursuit of holistic imagery that communes with what I feel are the deepest experiential flows within humans.

“I’m not a great believer in the supernatural, even though my work is often saturated with such imagery. But I really believe that the living human being is a near-infinite and stunningly detailed work of art, and I try to evoke that sacred marvelousness in every artwork that I create, pushing beyond myself to go as deep as I can.

“That’s really what I’m all about: the living, sacred human image.”



**Becoming Christ**  
Dual Image Medium, 2012  
(Daylight & UV Images)



**Bruce Rimell**

**Visual Artist & Independent Researcher, Leeds-Bradford, UK**



Bruce’s website, [www.biroz.net](http://www.biroz.net), presents a detailed archive of his art and research work from 2007 to the present day. His 2016 treatise, *‘Liminal Contact’*, on painting as Beyond-The-Self Exploration, may be found at [www.biroz.net/xibalbabooks/book-liminal-contact.htm](http://www.biroz.net/xibalbabooks/book-liminal-contact.htm)

Social media presences for Bruce’s work may be found on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/BruceRimellArts/](https://www.facebook.com/BruceRimellArts/) and Instagram at [www.instagram.com/brucerimell/](https://www.instagram.com/brucerimell/). Portfolio documents for galleries, and arts and media organisations can be found at [www.biroz.net/images/portfolio/](http://www.biroz.net/images/portfolio/)

Bruce’s portal at Cupola Gallery, Sheffield, UK, may be found at [www.cupolagallery.com/brucerimmell/](http://www.cupolagallery.com/brucerimmell/) while the Dreams & Divinities group in which he is a regular exhibitor can be found at [www.dreamsanddivinities.com](http://www.dreamsanddivinities.com)