



## ARTREACH GALLERY

at First Congregational UCC  
1126 SW Park Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 92705

Curator: Dr. Sheldon Hurst, drsheldonhurst@gmail.com

### PRESS RELEASE

## CONCEAL · REVEAL

### Paintings by Sanje Elliott and Jef Gunn

*Things are not what they appear to be: nor are they otherwise.*  
— Gautama Buddha, *Surangama Sutra*

**APRIL 1 - MAY 27, 2018**

ARTISTS' RECEPTION: Sunday, April 8, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm

CURATOR'S EVENT: Thursday, May 3, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

GALLERY HOURS: Weekdays 10 am - 2 pm  
Sundays 9 am - 1 pm



Sanje Elliott. *Rainbow Mantra #17*,  
2017. 16" x 20" acrylic.



Jef Gunn. *Five Stones*, 2007. 32" x 88"  
encaustic and cotton lace on panel.

Sanje Elliott and Jef Gunn are Portland artists with very different styles and artistic techniques. Yet they are brought together for this exhibition because they have a common experience through which their art is stimulated and by which their art is understood: the spiritual discipline of the chant in the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.

Sanje Elliott was born in Centralia, Washington and grew up in Portland, Oregon. During his formative years at Lewis & Clark he decided to be a fine arts painter and began to

travel, first to Florence where he studied art. Eventually he went to India where he found a teacher in the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism. He later spent two years in Kathmandu, Nepal, continuing his study of thangka painting and practice of Buddhism. Upon his return to the USA, he taught at The Naropa Institute, founded by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche in Boulder, Colorado. In 1991 he returned to Portland to teach, play music, and paint thangkas and abstract art.

Elliott's *Mantric Dance Paintings* are based on a variety of Tibetan mantras, incorporating the traditional chant "Om Mani Peme Hung" and other sacred words. These colorful chants are revealed in the rhythmic dance of the brush, showing the spontaneous spirit inherent in each mantra. The legibility of the words are concealed through overlay, even as the chants are overlaid in spiritual practice.

Jef Gunn is a Portland based artist who was born in Seattle, Washington. He began his art studies in Pasadena City College in 1973, continued his work under Professor Tom Allen at Cabrillo College in Aptos, California, and later became an apprentice to John Overton in Seattle. Additional study culminated in a BFA from Marylhurst University in 2005. He was influenced and greatly encouraged by his independent painting residency in Barcelona, Spain in 1986-7 and his painting residency in Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, France in 1988.

Tibetan Buddhism themes of obfuscation and revelation are realized in Jef Gunn's work. In his paintings, the layering of objects suggests a concealment. But his overall use of encaustic paint creates a luminous surface that brings to light what seemed hidden, and reveals suggested meanings. His installations also reflect these two themes. His installation "Lokeshvara Moonlight," set in the Chapel Gallery, is a room within the chapel room; it is approximately 8 feet tall, 8 feet wide and 14 feet long. Viewers are invited to enter the quietly illuminated interior as an act of meditation and discovery.

The public is invited to the Artists' Reception on Sunday, April 8, from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm, to see the art, meet artists Jef Gunn and Sanje Elliott, and reflect with them on the work they have created. On Thursday, May 3, at 6:30 pm, a Curator's Event will offer participants an experience of the spiritual practice of Tibetan Buddhist chant and an exploration of the relationship of the art and the practice of chanting. The artists will participate during this two hour workshop, which is free and open to the public.