Based in Fort Myers, Florida, Tony Gaglio says his work employs themes from contemporary art, abstract expressionism, and the psychedelic experience. You might surmise as much from his works’ titles—Astral Messenger, Halogen, High Life, Cytoplasm, Ascension, Brain Feeder, and Anubis Gateway, to rattle off but a few. Other images are hash-tagged with keywords such as #symmetrybuff, #trippy, or #abstracters_anonymous. For someone who claims to make art in his spare time, the wealth of images on his social-media channels is impressive.

“I have been working in graphic design for around six years now,” he says. “Previously, I was only well versed in illustration, but it quickly died out for me as a hobby once I really discovered what my computer was capable of.”

Like many folks, Gaglio came to psychedelic Photoshop imagery from an illustration background, but he soon realized what the digital world brought to the equation. He was able to translate the subjective into a recognizable reality.

“When looking at the capabilities of a computer as opposed to the freehand from an artistic perspective, I see more use in my abilities with a computer to be able to create something than what I could do with the utilities of the traditional artist,” explains Gaglio. “The digital world allows me to truly illustrate and portray the images of my imagination, along with the ease of use and short time span.”

From the Astral, a Flower Blooms

Astral, the cover image, is one of Gaglio’s earliest works, created when he first launched his online identity. At that time, he needed a body of content for his blog and portfolio. A marathon of image creation commenced, lasting for weeks. Many of the resulting images were mediocre, Gaglio admits. But eventually the muse prevailed and left him with enough material to showcase online. Astral was one of those images.

“The inspiration came when I was reading an article on still photography, and the photos used as a reference were of various flowers,” Gaglio recalls. “I wanted to implement some sort of floral element into a piece I was creating at the time, and that’s where the leaf symmetry originated from. The foreground of the piece features a spectrum of light entering the centerpiece and exiting through the bottom left. This was a tricky design to perfect, but it was created using a gradient and a few distortions in Photoshop.”

Almost all of Gaglio’s works originate in software, usually in Photoshop or similar image-editing programs. From there, the unconscious navigator directs him on a path toward the final result. You could say his process is free improvisation with subjective constraints.

“Each of the works in my portfolio originated from the trial-and-error use of trying different techniques and mashing together two different or similar ideas,” Gaglio says. “Most of it is more of a free-flowing experimentation in each piece rather than simply planning every step out. Each piece has its own journey and point of origin. However, the end result is what I like to see, and it is this result that keeps me doing what I do.”

This naturally leads to a preference for creating something out of nothing, for transforming the mundane into something creative and astonishing. A blank screen replaces the blank canvas. You get a glimpse of a budding artist still honing his particular voice.

Gaglio says Solitude (see Figure 1) is one of his most popular works. It’s reminiscent of the famous passage from the Leonard Cohen song “Anthem”: “There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.” The image conveys a dichotomy in which isolation meets acceptance and intimacy.
meets distance. No matter how dark your existence is, there’s a fracture in the system, which presents a way out.

“This piece is centered on the concept of a duality, the vertical symmetry of the mountain peak, flush with the saturated clouds and sunlight,” Gaglio says. “The real image I am trying to convey with this piece is one of a peace and equality in nature, created through the symmetry and the bright hues. Solitude was given its name because it conveyed to me the essence of seclusion from darkness and intrusion of light, being isolated in a state of happiness.”

Arctic Void and Symmetric Mirror (see Figures 2 and 3) exhibit still more evenness of proportion. Gaglio confesses that symmetry is one of his favorite qualities from nature, enabling him to transform the nothingness that surrounds him into an abstract, attention-grabbing world.

“Symmetry captures the viewer and creates endless horizons and depth surrounding the subject,” he says. “Much of my work now uses some form of symmetry in one way or another, and it is a main subject of my art and works in unison with the portrayal of the elements of nature and life.”

The Future Isn’t Physical
Gaglio says the future, for him, is digital, whether he remains in the realm of static images or works with video. Either one lets him reap the digital world’s benefits. However, for him, moving imagery further epitomizes the abstract digital world and presents more opportunities to transform the everyday into something special.

“The ability to create that moving image is something I have been working toward in the recent months,” he says. “As I continue to learn more techniques and mold my own style, one will be able to see how my work has changed and evolved over time. I don’t see myself venturing out into the physical art world anytime soon. … The plethora of tools and assets a computer gives me is just too tempting and rewarding to break free from.”

Gary Singh lives and writes in San Jose, California. Contact him at gsingh@avantguild.com.

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