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FOR GREATER ROCHESTER

The Artist and the Astrophysicist

Steve Carpenter and Adam Frank

A Shared Life

Christine and Paul Knoblauch

Exhibits

George Eastman House

Strong National Museum of Play



Artist Steve Carpenter puts the finishing touches on *Cosmo Dialogos 1*, a work that incorporates imagery of the Hubble Telescope and scientific formulas contributed by astrophysicist Adam Frank. Opposite: Frank and Carpenter.

The Importance OF Influence

Steve Carpenter and Adam Frank

By Sarah E. Lentini

ADAM FRANK IS AN ASTRO-physicist. Steve Carpenter is an artist. They are friends who are embarking on an exciting new joint creative venture that, like the very best of man's efforts, brings together seemingly disparate elements into an intriguing and illuminating new whole; brings ideas and ways of seeing from one context into another; brings together art and science.

Adam Frank is a professor of physics and astronomy at the University of Rochester. He studies the stars—in particular the matter ejected from stars at both the beginning and the end of their lives, which generates “some of the most beautiful structures seen in the night sky.”

Steve Carpenter is an artist—a painter, schooled in the techniques of the Dutch Masters, trained at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, who lived in Monaco for many years before returning to the U.S. and settling in Rochester ten years ago. He is the founder of the Steve Carpenter Gallery & Art Center and one of the founders of the New York Figure Study Guild. He has a devoted following of students and admirers, due I suspect to his unique combination of talent and warmth.

Steve and Adam are creating a new form of exploration and expression together by melding Hubble Telescope photographs of stars with Adam's formulas and Steve's paintings.

What emerges is a highly collaborative form of art made possible by a new form of technology—a digital printing and layering process,



guided by synthetic DNA-encoded electronics that far surpass past printing in both programming and performance sophistication. Developed by Tony Dungan of Rochester-based Lazer Inc., the *DuoPrint*™ combines photography, painting, collage, and printmaking. Importantly, Dungan's groundbreaking innovation provides artists with an expanded ability to create, using previous works in combination with new ideas.

It's a brave new world.



It's a moment when the world shrinks a little more, enabling us to bring our thinking and our applications together to confirm that, ultimately, we still don't know all that much about where we came from, why we're here, where we're going, and to confirm that the spirituality inherent in the best creative process remains relevant.

"The galaxy is filled with violence, with tumult," Adam Frank says. He and Steve are talking to a group of us in front of a PowerPoint presentation recently at the Steve Carpenter Gallery. "Areas of destruction in the universe are marked by the most brilliant [and most beautiful] ultraviolet light." He tells us that molecular clouds in the universe, formed by the original Big Bang, ultimately collapse on themselves, due to gravity, in the process creating many stars at once.

AS I LISTEN TO HIM, I FORM A CONCEIT—NEW TO ME—that I'm anxious to examine and put through a variety of contextual and metaphoric paces, as I might roll around a new food in my mouth.

I had known that large stars collapse on themselves, also due to gravity, brilliantly illuminating the darkness as they die, forming black holes, about which little is known. I had not known that a similar action and set of forces *form* stars as well.

I also had not known that during a star's life cycle—on its way to gravitational collapse or death—it accretes (takes on or accumulates) all sorts of stuff (matter), much like our knowledge (or our baggage

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or our experience). And, violence leads to creation in the universe, while equilibrium is the equivalent of death.

It got me to thinking about my own life—about violence, collapse, equilibrium, along with their concomitant beauty and illumination as a framework for human experience.

I should admit right now that the only reason I ever find anything interesting is if I see it as holding the potential to illuminate me in some way. And, so, I particularly love metaphor because it helps connect all things to each other—helps connect all things to each one of us.

I find it strangely hopeful to think that the gravitational violence of both my own birth and death will bring with it a brilliant illumination before I transition into the mysterious black hole we all dread. Illumination—finally!—could be good. Mystery is better than certain obliteration.

Both Steve Carpenter and Adam Frank are Buddhists. I learn that each finds spiritual comfort in his work—in the actual process inherent in painting (for Steve) and in mathematics (for Adam). It strikes me that each is imposing a kind of order on the vastness and seeming chaos of the universe around us—and that indeed this is what man does to comfort himself—he creates structures, frameworks, patterns, formulas, repetitions—like the rocking of an infant—to calm himself down.

But upon further reflection, I reject this, for repetition (violence, birth, accretion, collapse, illumination) is inherent in the universe and, therefore, is what we must do—what both we and the stars are *compelled* to do by our very natures. ☐



From dust to art

Like a winged creature balanced on a pedestal, the above image is actually a billowing tower of cold gas and dust rising from a stellar nursery called the Eagle Nebula. This Hubble Telescope image became the inspiration for Steve Carpenter and Adam Frank, and for the creation of *Cosmo Dialogos 1* (left).

This dramatic column of cool interstellar hydrogen gas and dust is an incubator for new stars. The pillar protrudes from inside a dark molecular cloud, as stalagmites rise from cavern floors.

The star cluster's intense ultraviolet light energizes gas, which produces the rich colors seen here. Hydrogen created the radiant red color at the bottom, whereas the blue in the upper region comes from glowing oxygen.

This small section of the Eagle Nebula is a scant 57 trillion miles long, located in the constellation Serpens, a star-forming region a mere 7,000 light-years away.